ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF INDIAN ENGLISH CRITICISM

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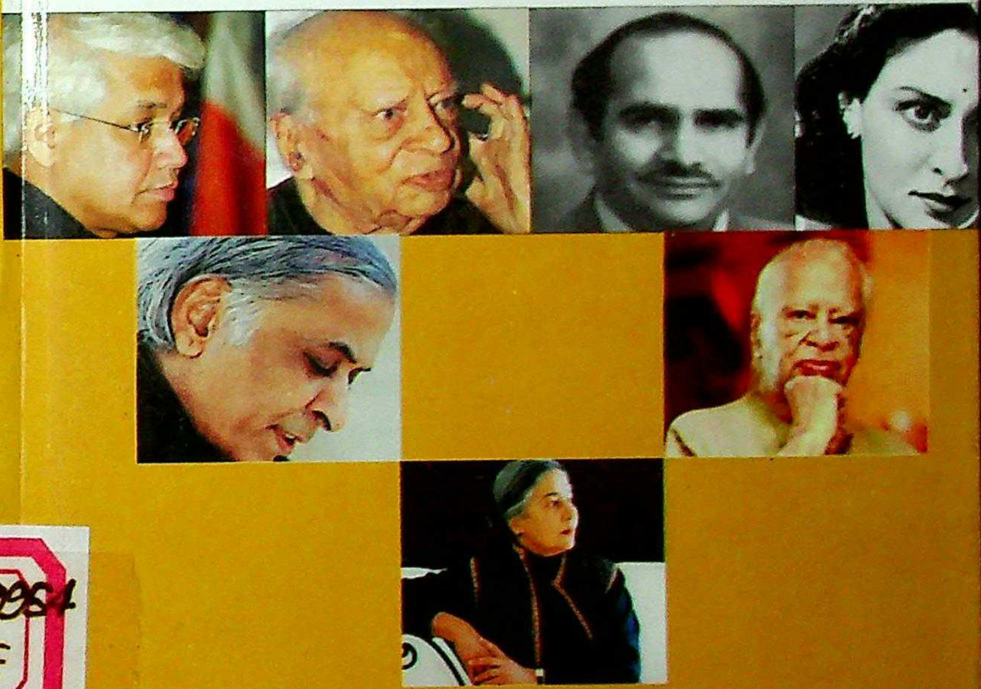

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OF
INDIAN ENGLISH CRITICISM

(MULK RAJ ANAND: A CRITICAL STUDY)

Vol. 3

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Editor

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PREFACE

Indian English literature is an **endeavour** of showcasing the rare gems of Indian writing in English. From being a curious native explosion, Indian English has become a new form of Indian culture and voice in which India speaks. While Indian authors, poets, novelists, essayists, dramatists have been making significant contributions to world literature since the pre-Independence era, the past few years have seen a massive flourishing of Indian English writing in the international market. Not only are the works of Indian authors writing in English soaring on the best-seller list, they are also receiving a great deal of critical acclaim. Starting from Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Toru Dutt to Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Allan Sealy, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Chandra ... the parade of fine Indian writers is long and lengthening.

Present-day India boasts an English-language literature of energy and diversity and has spawned a striking literary diaspora. Some writers of Indian descent (V. S. Naipaul , Bharati Mukherjee) now reject the ethnic label of 'Indian writers'. Mukherjee sees herself as American, while Naipaul would perhaps prefer to be read as an artist from nowhere and everywhere. For some Indian critics, English-language Indian writing is a post-colonial anomaly; its continuing use of the old colonial tongue is seen as a fatal flaw and renders it inauthentic. However, others have argued that English became a naturalized subcontinental language long ago. And it is part of the achievement of English-language Indian writers to have found literary voices as distinctively Indian, but also suitable for all purposes of art, as those other languages forged in Ireland, Africa, the West Indies, and the United States.

Encyclopaedia of Indian English Criticism is prepared keeping in view of the Indian students undergoing P.G. and U.G. in different Indian Universities. All authors and their works are selected strictly following the latest syllabus. Critical discussions are examination oriented. This encyclopaedia is a huge source of reference for scholars and teachers. The major works of selected authors are critically analysed taking help of different expert critics and research scholars working on those particular authors.

Editors

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Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand (12 December 1905 – 28 September 2004) was an Indian writer in English, notable for his depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. One of the pioneers of Indo-Anglian fiction, he, together with R.K. Narayan, Ahmed Ali and Raja Rao, was one of the first India-based writers in English to gain an international readership.

Born in Peshawar, he studied at Khalsa College, Amritsar, before moving to England where he attended University College London as an undergraduate and later Cambridge University, graduating with a Ph.D in 1929. During this time he forged friendships with members of the Bloomsbury Group. He spent some time in Geneva, lecturing at the League of Nations' School of Intellectual Cooperation.

Anand's literary career was launched by family tragedy, instigated by the rigidity of the caste system. His first prose essay was a response to the suicide of an aunt, who had been excommunicated by his family for sharing a meal with a Muslim. His first main novel, *Untouchable*, published in 1935, was a chilling exposé of the day-to-day life of a member of India's untouchable caste. It is the story of a single day in the life of Bakha, a toilet-cleaner, who accidentally bumps into a member of a higher caste.

Bakha searches for a salve to the tragedy of the destiny into which he was born, talking with a Christian missionary, listening to a speech about untouchability by Mahatma Gandhi and a subsequent conversation by two educated

Indians, but by the end of the book Anand suggests that it is technology, in the form of the newly introduced flush toilet that may be his saviour by eliminating the need for a caste of toilet cleaners.

This simple book, which captured the puissance of the Punjabi and Hindi idiom in English was widely acclaimed and Anand won the reputation of being India's Charles Dickens. The introduction was written by his friend, E. M. Forster, whom he met while working on T. S. Eliot's magazine *Criterion*. In it Forster writes: "Avoiding rhetoric and circumlocution, it has gone straight to the heart of its subject and purified it".

Inevitably, Anand, who spent half his time in London and half in India, was drawn to the Indian independence movement. At the same time, he also supported freedom elsewhere around the globe and even travelled to Spain to volunteer in the Spanish Civil War. He spent World War II working as a scriptwriter for the BBC in London, where he became a friend of George Orwell. He was a friend of Picasso and had Picasso paintings in his collection.

Anand returned to India in 1946, and continued with his prodigious literary output there. His work includes poetry and essay on a wide range of subjects, as well as autobiographies and novels. Prominent among his novels are *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), all written in England, and *Coolie* (1936), *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953), perhaps the most important of his works written in India. He also founded a literary magazine, *Marg*, and taught in various universities. During the 1970s, he worked with the International Progress Organization (I.P.O.) on the issue of cultural self-comprehension of nations. His contribution to the conference of the I.P.O. in Innsbruck (Austria) in 1974 had a special influence on debates that later became known under the phrase of 'Dialogue Among Civilisations.

Private Life of an Indian Prince, were more autobiographical in nature, and in 1950 Anand embarked on a project to write a seven-part autobiography, beginning with *Seven Summers.* One part, *Morning Face* (1968) won him the Sahitya Akademi Award. Like much of his later work, it contains elements of his spiritual journey as he struggles to attain a higher sense of self-awareness. He died in Pune on 28 September 2004 at the age of 98.

Novelist and Fighter

Mulk Raj Anand was arguably the greatest exponent of Indian writing in English, whose literary output was infused with a political commitment that conveyed the lives of India's poor in a realistic and sympathetic manner. He had been involved in India's freedom movement, been impressed by Marx's letters on India and his general political framework and had been a co-founder of India's greatest literary movement in the 1930s.

Born into a family of metal workers with an army background in Peshawar, he witnessed the bloody reality of colonial rule with the Jaillinwalla massacre at Amritsar in 1919. Like most Indians of his generation he threw himself into Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. This led him into student agitation against the British for which he received 11 stripes on his back and was briefly jailed. The experience had a deep impact on the young Anand and he concluded that notions of 'Empire' and 'Freedom' were complete opposites:

> I had grown up in the ferment of a great moral and political movement in which I had learnt that alien authority constricted our lives in every way. I can't say there was no bitterness in my hatred of imperialism, because I remember how often waves of fury swept over me to see hundreds of human beings go to jail daily after being beaten up by the police for offering civil disobedience. It was partly to escape further arrest, but also to avoid the petty bourgeois ambitions

of his soldier father, that Anand came to study at University College London in the autumn of 1925. Unlike most Indian students at the time he had to work in Indian restaurants and later for a publishing firm to earn his keep as his family were not in a position to fully finance his studies or maintenance. But he also became part of the literary crowd known as the 'Bloomsbury group'.

Here he met writers such as T. S. Eliot, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster and John Strachey among many others. This literary elite both impressed him and left him feeling quite perplexed and uncomfortable. London at that time was the centre of the English-speaking intellectual world and Anand had hoped to meet with like-minded individuals who shared his anti-colonial liberal views.

To his surprise he discovered that, according to Eliot, Gandhi was an 'anarchist' and that Indians should concentrate on cultural aspects of their society and leave the politics of governance to the British! Many of these writers had not visited India and so their impressions were formed by Rudyard Kipling's Kim, which to Anand was typical of colonial fantasies of India. It was partly in response to these perceptions that he wanted to write. As an Indian student in London, Anand found himself popular with the literary set and, fortunately for him, not all writers were as parochial as Eliot. He soon found himself drawn to the Woolfs and, more importantly, E M Forster. Anand held A Passage to India to be the best fictional writing on his homeland, as this went beyond the orientalist conceptions of the 'natives' and attempted to depict the complex, often contradictory and mostly confrontational impact of colonial rule in India. He had wanted to write about the ordinary, the mundane, everyday life experiences of Indians who were not kings and gods.

James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man impressed Anand greatly as it was a new literature infused with Irish nationalism. In 1927 Anand went to Ireland and enjoyed the writings of Yeats because his works represented the lives of ordinary people in villages and towns.

This was to be his model as he set about writing his first novel, Untouchable, published in 1935. It is a story based on the life of the most downtrodden, despised and oppressed section of Indian society, the outcastes – those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. This story is based on a single day in the life of Bakha, a latrine cleaner and sweeper boy. We follow him round on his daily chores cleaning up the shit of the rich and powerful, who despise him because of strict social rules governing ideas of purity and pollution. When he walks down the streets he has to signal an alarm with his voice as he approaches so that the 'pure' are forewarned to avoid even allowing his shadow to be cast upon them. On one occasion he does 'pollute' a caste Hindu and is chased, abused and attacked all day long for this defilement.

Anand was born into the kshatriya warrior caste, which is placed one below the top caste of the Brahmins priests. He had always befriended and played with the children of sweepers and as a child he had been shocked and disgusted by the suicide of a relative who had been disowned by his family for daring to share her food with a Muslim, for this too was regarded as pollution. Anand had always been disgusted with and opposed religious sectarianism, communalism and caste society. His soldier father had been involved with a Hindu reform movement, Arya Samaj. But Anand kept his distance, for despite its opposition to child marriage and the prohibition of widow remarriage, the movement was also quite evangelical in its attempts to 're-convert' Muslims to the 'true faith'. To Anand it harboured deep anti-Muslim sentiments with which he would have no truck.

With the publication of Untouchable, Anand had firmly associated himself with that brand of writers who saw 'political, social and human causes as genuine impulses for the novel and poetry'.

For Anand literature should be an interpretation of the truth of people's lives. It should be written from felt experience and not books. It was for this reason that he returned to India briefly in 1929. Being influenced by Gandhi, he came to his ashram in Ahmedabad, where he showed Gandhi drafts of his novel. Gandhi was extremely critical because he claimed there was too much of the 'Bloomsbury' feel to it, on which he was probably right. While in Ahmedabad Anand lived like a disciple and did his share of cleaning the toilets – an act seen as defilement for a caste Hindu. In this period Anand revised his book considerably and when Forster read it his retort to those who complained about the 'dirt' in the novel, was that "the book seems to me indescribably clean...it has gone straight to the heart of its subject and purified it".

Though this is his best known and most widely read novel, it was no easy job getting it published in the 1930s. Some 19 publishers had rejected this story for 'its dirt'. In despair Anand was on the brink of giving up when the twentieth publisher accepted the novel on the basis that E. M. Forster had agreed to write the preface. Anand praised Forster for his support as it was not only unusual for an Indian writer to have his central character be a latrine cleaner; many European writers would not touch a subject like this either.

Anand displays compassion for the plight of untouchables but never sentimentality. In many ways the novel represented his thinking beyond the limits of Gandhi's idea of untouchables as harijans – children of god. For Anand this is far too patronising and it is for this reason that his fictionalised account depicts a debate between a Gandhi-type figure espousing the oneness of humanity and simple living on the land and a poet who poses a modern solution to the problems of untouchability flushing toilets!

Anand's second novel also illustrated his compassion and concerns for the poor of India. In Coolie he portrays the life of young Munoo, kshatriya by caste but a peasant boy who travels from his mountainous village through north India and eventually finds himself in Bombay. He is an orphan and so is forced to take whatever work he can in order to survive. He works as a servant, in a mine, a factory and as a coolie – black men who empty their bowels in the fields. In each of these situations Munoo is subjected to harassment, beatings and financial exploitation at the hands of employers, moneylenders, and his so called betters. But the story is also about the development of a young boy who begins to learn about the world around him and attempt to make some sense of it.

This novel was written in 1936 and has a fictionalised account of a Bombay riot, which clearly represented Anand's thoughts on those agents who fuelled communalism in their desperate attempts to keep the country divided, but also to keep the poor and workers in their place. So the riot as witnessed by Munoo is deliberately engineered to break a potential strike through the use of communalised tensions between Hindus and Muslims. In some ways the failure of progressive and left forces to counter rising communal tensions left Anand feeling that perhaps partition could not be avoided after the growth of the Muslim League and the inability of Nehru to counter the right wing elements within Congress.

While in London Anand was conscious not only of colonial racist stereotypes of Indians that were prevalent among some British intellectuals but also the contempt in which they held British workers. A year after he arrived in London the 1926 General Strike took place, and was to have a profound effect upon him. His natural sympathies were with the strikers and their supporters for he found himself comparing the position of the English worker with that of Indians under colonial rule and found 'British democracy' seriously lacking. He believed there to be 'something rotten in the state of Denmark'. His outrage at the way the state treated the strikers was only outstripped by his astonishment at the attitudes of the majority of his fellow students who were happy to scab and volunteer to help run trains, trams and tubes. Anand saw this as treachery and he quickly associated himself with a small group of students who 'refused to be bullied by the others'. For his pains he was attacked in Gower Street by fellow students. He had no regrets, stating that 'in life there are some things worth getting beaten up for'.

London was home to many students from India throughout the 1930s and 1940s and Anand soon found himself gravitating towards the group of writers who would meet in people's living rooms to recite poems and short stories, and above all to discuss the struggle in India and the international crisis with the forward march of fascism in Europe. Anand was invited to represent India on the platform at the World Congress of Writers against Fascism in Madrid in 1935. Anand was acutely aware of the threat fascism represented for writers in Europe and the mortal danger it held for humanity.

After seeing the way writers and intellectuals in Europe were organising, on his return to London, along with the writer Sajjad Zaheer, an Indian Communist, he set up the All-India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA) in 1935. He penned the first draft of their manifesto which with minor adjustments was adopted at the first conference of the association in Lucknow in April 1936. This was a pan-Indian organisation that represented all the major linguistic regions of India and was staunchly secular in outlook and politically committed to the project of an independent united India with social justice and equality.

At its height it probably had over 30,000 members writing literature in all the Indian vernaculars. That this literary association was also a social and political movement closely aligned to the Communist Party of India and influenced by Nehruvian nationalism is in no small way to be credited to Anand. Though he never joined the Communist Party, claiming the party would never have been able to tolerate him, he was very much a 'fellow traveller', aligning himself with the best elements of the left tradition in India.

Anand's anti-fascist commitment led him to travel to Spain in 1937 to fight with the Republicans in the civil war. He felt it was his duty to show physical support because he was in Europe. He returned to India briefly in 1938 to address the second AIPWA in Calcutta, where he spoke about his experiences in Spain and insisted that writers use their craft as a means of exposing injustice and exploitation.

While in Spain he drafted another novel, Across the Blackwaters. This is the middle novel of a trilogy published in 1939. It is based on the experiences of Indian sepoys who are transported to Europe to fight in the First World War. The central character is Lalu, a young Hindu boy who has already broken with strict practices of Hindus by eating at Muslim shops while at home. In Europe we see how the soldiers are treated by their English masters within the army, but Anand also depicts the strict hierarchies among the Indians themselves in terms of caste, class and rank. Lalu not only flouts Indian conventions but in having an on-off flirtation with a French girl he challenges colonial morality under the very noses of the English officers.

The novel is full of compassion and humanity as well as humour for the thousands of mostly peasants from the Punjab who died in the trenches of France and Flanders. The roots of this story are in Anand's childhood. As a boy he had seen hundreds of men go off to Europe from his town and surrounding villages but only a handful returned. This novel achieved such critical acclaim that in 1998 the British Council adapted it as a play to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the end of the First World War.

Anand was pivotal to internationalising the experience of Indian writers to the outside world and he helped to bring an international dimension to the progressive writers' movement in India. He is brilliant at satirising the bigotries and orthodoxies of his times, but his novels also celebrate the spirit of human rebellion which embodies all his central characters. Today Salman Rushdie is credited with popularising Indian writing in English.

But 50 years earlier Anand had pioneered the writing of Indian literature which was accessible to the English-speaking world. And unlike Rushdie his works were inspired and informed by the lives of real people in unglamorous situations, warts and all. In addition his writings demonstrate a keen desire for political change and social transformation that remained with him throughout his life. The best tribute that readers of this journal could pay Mulk Raj Anand would be to read his novels and be inspired by the dedication and commitment he had.

A Creator with Social Concern

With the passing away of Mulk Raj Anand, India has lost one of its great progressive writers. He belonged to a generation of writers committed to the democratic ideals of egalitarianism and social justice, including stalwarts such as Shivram Karanth, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Gopinath Mohanty, Tarasankar Banerjee, Phaneeshwarnath Renu, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, Sajjad Zaheer, Ali Sardar Jafri, Kaifi Azmi, Sri Sri, Jayakantan, L.S. Ramamritam, Si.Su. Chellappa, Abdul Rehman Rahi and a host of others - who were inspired by the Gandhian identification with the marginalised and the Marxist principle of the struggle for class justice.

These writers, whose time begins with Premchand and Saadat Hassan Manto, and whose lineage can ultimately be traced back to the Bhakti and Sufi poets such as Basava, Kabir, Raidas, Chokha Mela, Gora, Bulle Shah, Baba Farid and Sheikh Abdul Lateef who rebelled against every form of hierarchy on earth, created their own epoch of secular and socialist literature with its own aesthetic of resistance. Coming from a family of hereditary craftsmen in Peshawar, Anand inherited from his father the pieties of craft and from his mother the rich tradition of mythology. He grew up, as he himself wrote, like most of his contemporaries, "a very superficial, ill-educated young man, without any bearings". After graduating from Punjab University, he won a fellowship to study at the University of London.

He obtained his Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of London in 1928, at the age of 23. Exposure to Marxism, a personal encounter with Mahatma Gandhi and a deep study of Gandhian ideals, participation in the anti-fascist struggle in Spain and involvement in the national struggles for freedom and democracy, strengthened his commitment to socialism and democracy.

Anand himself traced his growth as a progressive writer in a conversation with this writer at his Hauz Khas cottage in New Delhi in 1992: "My earlier writings were naive, impetuous and sporadic utterances coming from intense feelings. I found myself embroiled in sad moods, despairs and agonies. My teachers thought that my confusion was the natural expression of adolescence. They did not know that behind the broken lines there were many feelings about my good mother turning into a cruel mother-in-law, my father, a servant of the Sahibs even while being a pseudo-Arya Samajist, my professors, mostly pompous, and senior students, admirable because they were thinking brave thoughts."

He then reflected on how he met Muhammad Iqbal, the great poet who invited his attention to a question from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad that inspired his long poem, "Asrar-i-Khudi" (Secrets of the Self). The Upanishad says: "A devotee asked the sage: What may I do with my life? And the sage answers: Ask yourself every day: Who am I? Where have I come from? And where am I going?" He began to ask himself these questions and put down his loose thoughts in his diary, thoughts that hovered around the cruelty based on caste, class and gender he saw around him. He was also inspired by

Guru Nanak and Kabir, whose compassion he failed to find in Advaita philosophy.

At that time he fell in love with a Muslim girl. However, her parents married her to a railway guard as his third wife. The guard murdered her as he found Anand's love letters in her bag. This deepened his agony. Annie Besant's talk in his college on the freedom struggle, however, gave him hope; so did the tales of Balgangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh and Mahatma Gandhi. Annie Besant's chanting of the Rig Vedic hymn on creation moved him deeply. When the Principal was given a punishment transfer for having invited Annie Besant to the college, Anand and his collegemates went on strike and spent a month in jail.

His father's ire at the wayward son made him flee home. Again he went to Iqbal, ready to follow in his footsteps. Iqbal dissuaded him from going to Germany; instead he asked him to go to England and meet his friends there for help. He went to London with the Rs.101 Iqbal gave him and an equal amount gifted by his new Principal for having done well in the honours examinations.

In England, he was admitted for research in philosophy. The notes in his diary grew gloomier as he was being ill-treated even by the Indians, the 'brown Sahebs' in England and Churchill put down the coal miners' strike in 1926. Here he read Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Honore de Balzac, Victor Hugo, Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Rabindranath Tagore and others. During one of Virginia Woolf's reading sessions at her home that he attended regularly, a young critic, Edward Sackville, asked him what he was writing. He replied that he was writing about an outcaste and the critic reacted superciliously: "O, there can be no novel about the poor! One can only laugh at the Cockneys, like Dickens." This was unnerving.

Later in Ireland, he met the poets A.E (George Russell) and W.B. Yeats. When Anand reported to A.E. what Sackville had said, the poet asked him to go to Gandhi and join his battle against the caste system and imperialism. He wrote to Gandhi. Anand reached Ahmedabad in March 1927. Gandhi laughed at Anand's corduroy suit but agreed to look at the manuscript of *The Untouchable*. The next day he told Anand to refrain from using big words and write in a simpler language and transliterate what the 'harijans' say. He rewrote the novel at Gandhi's *ashram*; Gandhi approved the draft. Nineteen publishers in London rejected the script, but with E.M. Forster's preface, it was accepted by a publisher. *The Untouchable* went on to become a modern classic and was translated into 20 languages. That was the birth of Mulk Raj Anand the novelist.

Anand, the ideologue of the Progressive Literary Movement, was born simultaneously. Sajjad Zaheer, Dr. Ghosh, who taught Bengali at Oxford, Cedric Dover, an Anglo-Indian scholar from Calcutta, and Dr. M.D. Taseer, an Urdu poet, were the first to frame the manifesto heralding the new Movement. The manifesto condemned religious bigotry, casteism and superstitions of all kinds and exhorted writers to confront the dual reality of imperial hegemony and internal social decadence.

Since the manifesto attacked fascism as a pseudo-imperialist movement, intellectuals outside India such as Andre Gide, Andre Malraux, Laurence Housman, Ilya Ehrenberg, Pablo Neruda, Ernest Toller and Thomas Mann too welcomed its clear anti-fascist stance. With this the writers from India began to be invited to international conferences of writers. Anand and Sajjad Zaheer attended the World Conference of Intellectuals in 1935 organised by Gide and Malraux and presided over by Gorky.

The Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), with which he was associated, was instrumental in spreading the message of democracy and socialism, backed by the Communist movment. It was the period of creative turbulence that fired

Mulk Raj Anand's imagination: the same that had produced Premchand's *Godaan*, Thakazhi's *Chemmeen*, Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*, K.A. Abbas' *Inquilab*, Renu's *Maila Anchal* and Karanth's *Chomana Dudi*.

Anand brought to fictional life Bakha, his boyhood companion, the untouchable sweeper boy, in *The Untouchable*. Anand's mother abused Bakha for 'polluting' her son when Bakha carried home a bleeding Anand, hurt by a stone. Bakha is reviled by caste Hindus as he cleans latrines; but Anand captures Bakha's pride in his work: he tackles his odious job with a conscientiousness that invests his movement with beauty. The novel was not only a powerful social tract, but a remarkable technical feat as in a single days' action the author builds round his hero a spiritual crisis broad enough to embrace the whole of India. Forster wrote in its introduction: "It has gone straight to the heart of its subject and purified it."

Anand continued his interest in social themes with his next few novels dealing with the destiny of the working class in India. *Coolie* centred around Munoo, an orphan boy dying of tuberculosis brought on by malnutrition. It exposes the whole system through its victim's tale of exploitation. Even in the dreariest of surroundings, the little hero retains his qualities of warm-heartedness, love, comradeship and curiosity. In *The Village*, inspired by the experience of Anand's mother's family whose land was taken away by the landlord of the village, the novelist explores the state of the poor peasantry under British rule.

If *The Old Woman and the Cow* is about the underprivileged women in Indian society, *The Big Heart* is woven around a coppersmith whose existence is threatened by mechanisation. *Across the Black Waters*, another of Anand's widely translated works, is about a peasant hero who joins the army only to fight another's war. The agony of the sepoy is reproduced here in ironic good humour. In *The Sword and the Sickle*, this hero is back in India to join the peasant movement floated by M.N. Roy and Kanwar Brajesh Singh (who later married Svetlana, Soviet communist leader Joseph Stalin's daughter). Anand wrote this novel while staying with the peasants in Kalakankar. It was published at the same time as Ignazio Silone's *Bread and Wine* that dealt with a similar theme.

Meanwhile, Anand witnessed the bloodbath of the First World War after he joined the India Section of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) along with George Orwell. The Quit India movement had by then been launched. The British government began censoring Anand's reports with their nationalist bias, but Churchill directly intervened and stopped the censorship as Anand was an anti-fascist. Coming back to India, Anand persuaded Nehru to organise the first Asian Writers' Conference, in which 120 writers from across the continent took part. It was attacked as a Communist conference; but the participation of Nehru, S. Radhakrishnan and Rajaji saved the platform. It also inspired the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference the next year, which later inspired writers such as Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe. Reflecting on those days, Anand told this writer: "The writers who criticise the progressives don't understand that there is a search for the other in all writing... The Symbolist movement in France, the Imagist movement in poetry in the U.K. and the U.S., the Impressionist movement in painting in Europe, the Leaning Tower school of British poetry led by C.D. Lewis, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender and Louis McNiece, the Anti-Fascist Movement in Europe led by writers like Gide and Malraux and, of course, the Russian writers - all these were expressions of a powerful unity emerging among the writers and activists in solidarity with people... . They shared common concerns about human dignity."

Anand's later novels, while retaining his passion for social justice, show greater depths of emotion and achieve a synthesis of the social and personal concerns. *Private Life of an Indian Prince* is an example of this integration. Based on his experience with lost love, Anand convincingly explores the psychological workings of its hero. The novel is constructed around a youthful prince who holds out against a union with the rulers of three other princely States. He is encouraged to make his choice by his mistress, an illiterate peasant woman. But in the process he loses his mistress, his state and his sanity. In the words of S. Cowasjee, who has studied Anand's work closely, this is a "great historical novel that is at the same time a work of art". He calls it a "Dostoevskyian novel on a grand scale".

In addition to these novels, Anand intermittently worked on a proposed seven-volume series of autobiographical novels titled *The Seven Ages of Man*. Of these, *Seven Summers and Morning Face* - which won the Sahitya Akademi award - earned him comparisons to Tolstoy. *Confession of a Lover*, which won him the E.M. Forster award, and the *Bubble* continued to represent the aspirations of a whole generation of Indian youth in a momentous period of the country's history. Anand's short stories, which run into eight volumes, illustrate a wide range of mood and tone, from a humorous appreciation of life's little ironies to an awareness of its deeper tragedies. They are written with a Dickensian feeling for character and environment and bridge the gap between the oral and written traditions of Indian fiction.

Equally noteworthy was his passion for painting, sculpture and architecture whose best expression was the issues of *Marg* that he edited for years. He was a fellow of the Lalit Kala Akademi and the Sahitya Akademi, a laureate of the International Peace Prise and a Padmabhushan, honours that never affected his quiet simplicity and dignity as a warm-hearted human being. Accepting the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship, he said: "Living in action, as Gandhi taught us to do, means the cultivation of the courage to be human with other humans: it means involvement with all earth's citisens; it entails the acceptance of the heroism of defeat as Jawaharlal showed it because defeat involves persistence in struggle, which makes us more than ourselves, sustains us in compassion, affection and devotion in spite of obstacles... Poetry today has to become courage." This attutide also accounts for his cheerful acceptance of Dalit and feminist writing that he considered the progressive writing of our time.

Anand was to Indian people what Anton Chekhov was to Russians: a profound interpreter of their lives, an analyser of their deepest conflicts, a verbaliser of their agonies. Traditionalists criticised him for his departure from tradition; and dogmatic Marxists called him an ambivalent modernist and a liberal humanist. But he believed to the end in people's ability to change themselves and the world. He followed the Gandhian ideals of self-help and self-renewal, rejected the consumerist civilisation of the West and fought against the forces of revivalism. Anand was critical of much of what is written in English in India today; he was all for developing a literature of concern, of awareness, of intellectual opposition. He was more concerned with the passionate moment than the rigours of form. His bardic manner, however, finally achieved an effect analogous to a musical rhapsody: familiarity and elevation coalesced in his fiction giving it a 'composed matter-of-fact magnificence'. He was different from both his eminent contemporaries, R.K. Narayan, with his urbanity of style, and Raja Rao, with his sacred, confessional vision. For Anand, literature was a force that released men and women from pre-ordained fate. In his hands, metaphysics became an ethics without God as when Gandhi said: "God comes to the poor in the form of bread."

2

A Criticism of Anand's Major Works

UNTOUCHABLE

Untouchable is a novel by Mulk Raj Anand first published in 1935. The novel established Anand as one of India's leading English authors. The book was inspired by his aunt's experience when she had a meal with a Muslim person and was treated as an outcast by his family. The plot of this book, Anand's first, revolves around the argument for eradicating the caste system. E. M. Forster wrote the introduction for subsequent editions.

Untouchable is Mulk Raj Anand's first novel and it brought to him immense popularity and prestige. This novel shows the realistic picture of society. In this novel Anand has portrayed a picture of untouchable who is sweeper boy. This character is the representative of all down trodden society in pre-independence of India. The protagonist of this novel is the figure of suffering because of his caste. With Bakha, the central character, there are other characters who also suffer because of their lower caste. They live in mud-walled cottages huddled colony in which people are scavengers, the leather-workers, the washer men, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters and other outcastes. The lower castes people are suffering because they are by birth outcaste. But Mulk Raj Anand had depicted the hypocrisy of the upper caste people that men like Pt. Kali Nath enjoy the touch of the Harijan girls. Mulk Raj Anand exposes all this hypocrisy and double standard or double dealing. In this novel Bakha is a universal figure to show the oppression, injustice, humiliation to the whole community of the outcastes in India. Bakha symbolises the exploitation and oppression which has been the fate of untouchables like him. His anguish and humiliation are not of his alone, but the suffering of whole outcastes and underdogs.

Untouchable shows the evil of untouchability in Hindu Society. The novel's emphasis on an individual's attempt to emancipate himself from the age old evil of untouchability. Anand is here, concerned with evils of untouchability and the need for radical empathy. He describes the pathetic conditions of the untouchables through the character Bakha, their immitigable hardships and physical and mental agonies almost with the meticulous skill of historical raconteur. In the words of Marlene Fisher:

> ...Anand's first novel, then, is at one and the same time a fine piece of creative work in terms of its own artistic integrity and an indication of it author's humanistic commitments and future novelistic directions.

Untouchable is a faithful recordation and a transcription of the pathetic plight of untouchables who are subjected to immitigable social indignities, "only because of their lowly birth." Anand depicted the miserable condition of the small family of Lakha, the jamadar of the sweepers. Anand not only throws light on their object poverty and suffering but also focuses its attention on their low-caste. As K.N. Sinha comments:

> ...The novel has a tragic beauty of its own. The will to revolt and the sheer impossibility of successful doing so under the circumstances constitute the basic tension in the novel. The hero

> is simultaneously a rebel and victim. His anguish becomes our sorrow. But Bakha has no tragic status as scapegoat and a victim, tyrannised by a recalcitrant society. He is the lowest of the lowly whose destiny does not suffer any appreciable erocion.

Bakhahas to fight the enemies not from within but from without, and he is not as against any particular individual as against the whole hierarchical stiffness of the social custom. With this sense of alienation from the conglomerate humanity, he becomes much distressed when he comes to know that he is ostracised even before he is aware of it. Cleaning three rows of latrines in a single day and starting his routine work with his father's cascade of abuses and unconcealed threats are the rituals he had to undergo umpteen times:

> ...Get up, ohe, you Bakhya, ohe son of pig! ...Are you up? Get up, you illegally begotten.

His day starts with endearing entreaties and downright abuses by his father and his encounter with the high-caste people, who can not put up with his very sight. His sturdy body, which could bear any physical labour, is drained of all the vestigial energy. He has to remain content with the pan cakes thrown at him, by the high caste Hindus, and is more than shocked when he is slapped by a caste-Hindu, for having 'polluted' him. Though he has the muscular strength to hit back, he keeps his cool, thus taking all the indignities to his stride. As Anand describes:

> ...His first impulse was to run, just to shoot across the throng, away, away, for away from the torment. But then he realised that he was surrounded by a barrier, not a physical barrier, because one push from his hefty shoulders would have been enough to unbalance the skeleton-like bodies of the onlookers, but a moral one.

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The action of the "touched man", polluted by the untouchable Bakha, is a deliberate one, which only reveals the pathetic predicament of the untouchables. As Bakha says:

> ...All of them abused, abused, abused why are we always abused? The sanitary inspector that day abused my father. They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. They hate dung. I hate it to...I am a sweeper, sweeper-untouchable I am an untouchable!

The conditions which the untouchables are enforced in to are really shocking through one can share their aches and agonies. When Sohini goes to a community well to fetch water, she becomes embroiled in unsuspected caste recriminations. Their plight is so dire that even for the fulfillment of the basic needs like water and food; they have to depend on the mercy of high-caste Hindus. Sohini has to wait as well, for quite along time, to fetch a pot full of water, for her tired and thirsty brother, putting up with the lustful and ogling men. One of the Hindus, Pandit Kali Nath, draws water for her and calls her his house to clean the courtyard and tries to molest her. But when she shouts to protect herself, he cries out "polluted", "polluted". Bakha arrives at the scene only to remain a mute witness, though his first impulse was to beat him up. He desperately comes and tells his father.

> ...They think we are mere dirt, because
>
> We clean their dirt.

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A double-edged dramatic irony operates through this scene. The defiant consciousness or the "faint stirrings of rebellion", which had germinated in Bakha by the slapping incident begins to take an articulate from. Bakha enters the temple courtyard apparently to clean it. The painful knowledge of the brand of untouchability which won him a slap on the face arouses in him contrary feelings –fear and curiosity hones up his determination to seek the cause of stigmata on him. Perhaps the object of mystery the crowds of the orthodox Hindus much more orthodox than the crowd in the bazaar are walking up the temple steps to worship is responsible for it. "What have these people come here to worship,? He asked himself".

He advances towards the stairs "with a determined hurried step...A murderer might have advanced like that...". But he soon loses his grace crippled by "the dead weight of years of habitual bending cast on him". He goes back to collect the heaps of rubbish. But he stops after a while to wipe the sweat off his forehead. Then he finds that the temple stood challengingly before him and it "seemed to advance towards him like a monster," the monstrous symbol of unrelenting authority that "murdered without a rite" the unfortunate victims thrown away from its fold. It might as well "envelop" him, throttle his freedom and dignity, and reduce, him to a helpless subhuman existence as the oppressive forces of authority did for centuries.

But he is not to be deterred, he struggles. The struggle is with his own weak will and unseen forces of evil ultimately on a metaphysical plane: "He hesitated for a while. Then his will strengthened. With a sudden onslaught he had captured five steps of the fifteen that led to the door of the temple". He becomes a rebel in action.

The rumbling of rebellion can perhaps, be beard only by the most sympathetic and imaginative ear. Bakha too impelled by sure sense of "inner impulse pushed him a step or two further up", but for a moment he loses his balance as though threatened by a power which is more than a match assault and reaches the top step. Now he has a glimpse of the "hidden mystery" hidden from the "innermost recesses of the tall dark sanctum."

Anand's hero is not of the race, not of the time and the place, but exemplifies all humanity caught in contingencies of an antiquated social order that impedes his evaluation in to a self-consistent social life.

> ....Bakha is one of those millions who crawl and creep and exist almost anonymously.

Anand in *Untouchable* deals with the outcastes engaged in an intense struggle with oppressive forces. Bakha has to struggle and suffer every minute because he is untouchable and he has no right to live like other upper caste.

By the character of Sohini, Anand tried to show the picture of Indian sweeper caste people especially the lower caste females. Sohini has to wait for water for hours because she is from downtrodden class. Anand is undoubtedly writing a message for his own culture in *Untouchable*; much of the novel contrasts the innate decency of Bakha with the gap between the protestation and practice of untouchability among caste Hindus in India.

Chiefly in the hypocrisy of the priest who claims Bakha's sister has defiled him when he himself fondled the young girl's breasts, but also in other scenes where characters cut corners when it suits them. Sohini is the most important character in the novel *Untouchable* written by Anand because she is the passive sufferer. She is intelligent and beautiful but she has to wait for hours for drinking water on well. When Pandit Kali Nath tries to come close to Sohini she was not ready so Pandit himself spread rumors that she polluted him. Sohini tries to tell the truth but no one was ready to believe her. It is the real picture of the outcaste women.

Mulk Raj Anand depicted the practice of untouchability is essentially a matter of pretentious religiosity and exploitation. By a very well worked out technique of dramatic irony. By juxtaposing the plight of Sohini with that of Bakha, the novelist has reinforced the representative character of the figure of the untouchable. Mulk Raj Anand in *Untouchable* exposed the social realism in contemporary Hindu society.

COOLIE

Coolie is a novel by Mulk Raj Anand first published in 1936. The novel reinforced Anand's position as one of India's leading English authors. The book is highly critical of British rule in India and India's caste system. The plot revolves around a 14 year old boy, *Munoo*, and his plight due to poverty and exploitation aided by the social and political structures in place.

The Metaphors of Untouchable and Coolie in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels and his Sense of Social Justice

Untouchable, Mulk Raj Anand's first novel, is a highly charged intellectual discourse on the karmic illusion of work and untouchability, and *Coolie* is a humanistic discourse on the subject of human labour. It may be argued that the central issue in either case is the philosophy of work and that untouchable and coolie are analogical metaphors of human enslavement, subjugation and oppression.

While the setting of both the novels is colonial India, the two metaphors as developed by Anand have a much more comprehensive meaning and context, perhaps much too larger than could possibly be carried by the respective narratives or even allowed by the tenuous scope of history. It is indeed true that Bakha, the "hero-anti-hero" of *Untouchable*, is an Indian sweeper and Munoo of *Coolie* an Indian coolie, but they are universal and global figures: the two metaphors provide a poignant commentary on man's inhumanity to fellow man in the history of the human race, especially on the formation of collusive centres of power and the unprecedented complexity of these hegemonic structures in controlling human beings.

It must be recognised that Bakha and Munoo are not Promethean heroes, nor do they share any of the characteristics of Carlyle's hero or Nietzsche's superman. Like Blake's chimney sweeps and Dickens's orphans, they are the rejects, the disinherited and helpless victims whose lives and work have been permanently devalued, misappropriated and made into stagnant categories by repressive traditions of history. Ironically, the western philosophical debate on human amelioration and progress and on liberty, equality and justice from Hobbes to Rousseau to Hegel to Marx has apparently failed to find any conclusive answer, if there is one at all, for the Bakhas and Munoos of humanity. Does the discourse in *Untouchable* and *Coolie* suggest that Anand intends to take Bakha and Munoo out of the capitalist hell and plant them in a socialist paradise? The colonial-capitalist hell, it should be noted, has a rigid structure of penal servitude, and, indeed, it should remind one of Michel Foucault's use of Jeremy Bentham's conceptual model of the Panopticon.

For the purpose of the present study, a metaphor may be considered a highly condensed intellectual and analytical view of human experience; it is a poetic statement of sociohistoricity and ideology; and its function is the unobtrusive revelation of discourse, ideology, language and consciousness. Thus considered, the two metaphors, the untouchable and the coolie, are highly evocative of sociohistoricity, ideology and metaphysics. No doubt, untouchable and coolie are allied metaphors of dehumanisation and human subjugation, but it is significant to note that Anand's interest in the plight of the lowest dregs of society, workers, peasants and labourers and in their confrontational struggle further continued vigorously in *Two Leaves and Bud* (1937), *The Village Trilogy – The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940) and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) – and *The Big Heart* (1945).

Unquestionably, Bakha, Munoo, Lalu of *The Trilogy* and Gangu of *The Big Heart* are victims of their aggressors. "My novels," remarks Anand, "were intended to be different from those of others, departures from the upper and middle section fictions." "I wished to recreate," he adds, "the folk, whom I knew intimately, from the lower depths, the lumpens and the suppressed, oppressed, and repressed, those who have seldom appeared in our literature except in Sarat Chatterji, Prem Chand, Bibhuti, Tarashankar and Maneck Bannerji".

However, Anand's statement must be considered in the historical context of the British colonial governance of India. Whatever inference one might draw from the current assessment of the role of British colonialism and imperialism, the fact remains that the nature of modernity implemented by the European colonisers was a sort of "political modernity." Consequently, the rural constituencies of the Empire remained comparatively undeveloped. In fact, whatever the nature and amount of diffusionism, the striking issue in the politics of the British imperial governance of colonies like India is that the colonial space became the battleground for keeping the colonial native on par with the British working class. Anand recounts his first impression of England: "I had been struck by the peculiar dignity and self-respect with which the porters, sweepers and other workers bore themselves here against the coolies in India who were always being kicked about and intimidated.... I admired the way in which those who did unpleasant work seemed to recognise the dignity of labour".

Ironically, however, Anand's impression of the British coolies and other workers turns out to be an illusion. There is hardly any doubt that Anand's social and political thought must be examined against the crosscurrents of major European intellectual thought, especially British socialism, communism and humanism. During his twenty-five-year stay in England, Anand became a part of the 1930s movement, and yet he remained firmly committed to the cause of India's freedom from Great Britain.

In *Untouchable*, the discourse between the young moderate poet Iqbal Nath Sarshar and the barrister R.N. Bashir recapitulates the western and the Gandhian ideologies of social and moral progress. But it is the eloquently crafted philosophical basis of Gandhi's address that dominates the scene. Although one might look at the issue of casteism in its essential context of the vulgarities and misinterpretations of Hinduism, the question remains: will industrial progress and modernity liberate the Bakhas of society from the karmic obligation of cleansing human excreta and guarantee them basic human dignity and general acceptance in the social order without any reference to their birth or heredity? Ironically, Bakha caught in the mase of the Indian caste system cannot even rebel.

The destined life of a sweeper is Bakha's karmic and hereditary obligation; even Bakha's dreamworld remains tersely defined by the iron hand of destiny. Although Gandhi declares categorically and emphatically that untouchability is "the greatest blot on Hinduism", his moral philosophy seems to be too idealistic to meet the immediate ends of social justice. Some of the legal and social programmes proposed by the poet Sarshar are also equally idealistic. But Forster is quick to recognise the tangle to which the Hindus have unfortunately tied themselves.

According to this tangle, those who clean dirt are designated as dirty, impure and hence, outcastes. I believe that the frowning expression, "They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt," should have been unconditionally subjoined to the following statement: "They think we are born as dirt; therefore we are destined to clean their dirt". Obviously, the metaphor focuses on the metaphysics of evil and especially on the nature of the deterministic order: the soul is born into the lowest class because of its basic imperfection, in which case then the life of a sweeper becomes a mode of punishment, a penal servitude.

Forster's observation, "Really, it takes the human mind to evolve any thing so *devilish*", implies that no genuine religion can be the progenitor and enforcer of such a perfidious plan that will classify people as evil, punish them with a life of the lowest existence and deny them any form of release from their destiny. Admittedly, E.M. Forster compliments Anand for his sharper power of observation of Indian social reality, probably better than that of his own in *A Passage to India.* Forster's frank and piercing analysis of untouchability is, one must say, an exuberant endorsement of Anand's presentation of the sociohistorical and religious muddle in which Bakha is caught.

The debate on casteism and untouchability from Gandhi to Ambedkar and to the present times is still very much alive in the post-independence India. It may be argued that the ancient conception of varunashram does not approve the corrupt historical practices of casteism and untouchability. It may be further argued that modern progress will provide legal remedies in achieving social justice and equality. But one may think that the Hindu mind is predominantly caste-conscious, and ask whether it will ever free itself from the theodicy of casteism. Bakha's burning desire to go to school and to become a sahib may be a child's fancy, because his father "had told him that schools are meant for the babus, and not for the lowly sweepers." Bakha had been painfully aware of the absurdity and cruelty of the upper-caste Hindus who have openly and boldly embraced the tradition of untouchability.

The psychoanalytical complexity of Bakha's dream only parodies the western discourse on equality, liberty and justice. The extent to which Bakha's innocence has been violated by social and religious determinism becomes abundantly clear by the ironic enslavement of his desire: all that Bakha dreams is to become a babu or a sahib. Anand's treacherous irony here exposes the colonial-imperialist strategies of doubly colonising the Bakha types. Bakha knows that he is born into a family of sweepers, but he is unable to comprehend the intricate problem of untouchability.

He helps people clean their bodies, but he does not understand how his touch will pollute those who profess purity by birth. What manifests in the minds of the upperclass majority is the fear of intermingling and hence of the probable loss of inherited purity. The drastic implications of the Freudian ideas of fear, estrangement and Oedipal impulse are incontrovertibly congealed in the metaphor of the untouchable.

Ironically, the temple priest, overpowered by his sexual desire for Bakha's sister Sohini, must have been terribly confused about the meaning of the words "purity" and "defilement." Evidently, Anand has placed the entire problem of the soul's purity and impurity in the midst of the modern discourse, eastern and western, on the nature of man, the origin of evil and class structure, firmly suggesting that British colonial attitudes by and large have endorsed such forms of human bondage.

Can untouchables become "free from the stigma of untouchability" and finally emerge "as useful members of casteless and classless society"?. Can Bakha the outcaste ever achieve some sort of "community identity"? Do any of the models cleverly introduced by Anand in the concluding section of the narrative – the Gandhian model that combines the ideal of swaraj and the abolition of untouchability as a single goal, the professed social equality and liberty in western thought as outlined by Bashir, the Christian idea of salvation by conversion as propagated by Colonel Hutchinson and the poet Sarshar's harangue, especially his plea for industrialisation – provide any final answers to Bakha's miserable situation? Does Bakha share Gandhi's plan of integral progress and his unfailing optimism or the erstwhile determinism deeply embedded in the fundamental assumptions of the caste system? The irony is that none of these models provides any hope for the realisation of freedom and identity. One must not forget the intensity and magnitude of Bakha's despair at the end of the narrative.

It is this undecidability, a sort of aporia, that unobtrusively sharpens the meaning of the metaphor of the untouchable. Bakha may very well try to cleanse his soul as adjoined by Gandhi, but the question, "But shall I never be able to leave the latrines?", constitutes the ineffable centre of the discourse and still remains unanswered. Bakha's stark disappointment should be weighed against the illusory hope extended by the poet in the efficacy of the machine: "Then the sweepers can be free from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of casteless and classless society". But the poet's resplendent vision of the abolition of untouchability and the formation of civil society is dependent on industrialisation and hence on the full application of modernity. One can readily see Anand's subtle irony here and E.M. Forster seems to join Anand for any such programme of installing flush systems will depend on the British colonial regime's policy of modernising India.

Anand must have been apprehensive of the limitations of western experiment when he put these words in Bashir's mouth: "In fact, greater efficiency, better salesmanship, more massproduction, standardisation, dictatorship of the sweepers, Marxian materialism and all that!". The tragedy and the stunning paradox are frightfully complex in Bakha's reflective ambivalence – that he will no doubt purify his soul but remain permanently entrenched in the business of cleaning latrines. One might ask if Anand is attempting an assimilationist technique whereby all these various ideologies will be conceptually integrated in Bakha's mind.

In *Untouchable*, Anand declares, "I meant to recreate the lives of the millions of untouchables through a single person". Bakha as a universal representative of all untouchables has been slapped on his face by an upper-caste Hindu for polluting him by his touch. This slap on Bakha's face, continues Anand, is symbolic of the insult "as in Dostoevsky's Insulted and Injured...." Like other untouchables, Bakha has been persistently abused, humiliated and rebuked. One must not forget the abusive name-calling at the temple and also the pernicious charge of defilement of the temple by the priest who had molested Sohini.

But it is the slap on Bakha's face that immediately awakens in him the truth of the wretchedness of his humiliating and repelling existence as a sweeper: "For them I am a sweeper, sweeper – untouchable! Untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word! Untouchable! I am an Untouchable!". The words "sweeper" and "untouchable" are conjoined linguistically and metaphorically to give rise to feelings of shame and disgust. Does Bakha's and for that matter Munoo's work have any dignity and pleasure of fulfilment? Does Bakha's work have any real value, social or economic? According to Riemenschneider, Bakha's work of cleaning latrines falls under the category of estranged or "alienated labour" that is forced upon him, but most certainly it is devoid of any true pride, happiness or gratification. His work has no genuine economic productivity, nor can its economic value ever become negotiable.

On the contrary, it creates feelings of mass displeasure and pain resulting from humiliation and degradation of the nature of his work. But it is the mental recognition of his lowly social status as an untouchable that sharpens the metaphorical significance of the word that categorises him. One wonders if Bakha at this level of mental recognition would turn into a radical rebel. Or, will he become an intellectually and morally enlightened person who will be able to assimilate the menial character of his work into his larger vision of the improvement of the human condition based on love and hope? Evidently, we are gradually moving toward Anand's vision of progressive humanism.

Whatever the origin of the tradition of the caste system or varanashram in Hinduism, the tradition as defined by Manu or the tradition engendered over the years by serfdom that is supposed to have given birth to the sophisticated structure of casteism, the fact remains that casteism has emerged as a form of cursed human bondage. "The sweeper," remarks Forster, "is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties may even become free, but the sweeper is bound for ever, born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolations of his religion". It is the permanence and the irretrievability of the bondage coupled with the resulting social contempt that define the moral protest. The untouchables, as a class, were cast out of the four-tier division of the ancient Aryan society, although it must be recognised that original paradigm of the fourfold division, like Plato's threefold division of society, was an idealistic conception intended to test the spiritual and intellectual abilities of its citisens. But it was not intended as a hereditary division.

In the historical practices of the Hindu social structure, the lowest dregs were segregated, as were the Calibans, the lumpens, the destitutes and the dispossessed. Fredric Jameson in his discussion of misérabilisme or dirty realism refers to the sociopolitical process of creating the "social other" and consequently of ghetoisation – the systematic attempt to create "forbidden spaces" for the contemptible sections of the proletariat. The untouchables in ancient Indian society were not only ghetoised but also were expected to perform menial tasks for the upper-class gentry. Of course, the poignant irony is that Bakha is a slave of slaves.

The untouchable or the Indian nigger is a compound metaphor that combines the moral and metaphysical assumptions with economic, political and sociological realities. But one might argue that considered in the context of the nineteenth century debate on racial hybridity and anthropological and scientific theories, such as social Darwinism and interracial sexuality, the anxiety of the early Aryans to preserve their racial purity had led to the walled separation of castes and particularly to the exclusion of the members of the lowest caste and the outcastes. Thus, the caste issue has been considered the logical equivalent of the racial issue and the gravest fear underlying the separation of castes is one of miscegenation. It should be remembered that Sohini, the subject of the forbidden copulation, is the daughter of an untouchable.

One might therefore ask if the two metaphors, the untouchable and the coolie, sustain their meaning and universality outside the Indian space, the third-world geomoral structure, encompassing both the colonised and decolonised spaces. One might also ask if the detestable spaces in communities created by the politicoeconomic power and its collective hubris can be renovated and reintegrated in the structure of a civil society. There is no doubt that in the portrayal of Bakha, Anand has gone to the lowest depths of a social order where one has a clear glimpse of the fixed and stagnated reality resembling Dante's hell. The metaphors of the untouchable and coolie belong to fixed categories, permanently assigned spaces at the lowest rung of a civil structure with one distinct difference: while a coolie may participate in the modernist and postmodernist processes of evolutionary progress, an untouchable despite his education remains permanently fixed to his station. Since the knowledge gained by a coolie and an untouchable belongs to this fixed station of reality, its scope and value are characterised by stagnation and fixity. Ironically, however, it is only the dominated and the colonised other who are charged with stagnation and fixity.

Do Bakhas and Munoos, the lowest dregs of humanity, have any consciousness? What is the value of their work? In Hegel's philosophy of the master-slave relationship, the consciousness of the worker, because of his commitment to work, is supposed to be superior to that of his master. According to Hegel, "Selfconsciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness". Since the world of material reality is basically created by the slave, the master simply remains a consumer, an outsider. In the dialectic of the master-slave relationship, the slave realises his self-consciousness and gratifies his desire by annulment of the otherness or foreignness but only in the object-world of materiality.

Thus, it is only through the discipline of work that the slave as knower and the creator of the object world learns to recover his consciousness into a structure of conceptual and symbolic thinking. Evidently, Hegel is defending the ethical formulations of work ethics in Christianity and in Romanticism. But Marx, despite his indebtedness to Hegel for dialectical thought, takes a drastically different position in his conception of dialectical materialism: "Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process". Here is Marx's more direct statement quoted by Anand in *Apology*: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness".

Thus consciousness in Marx's philosophy of cultural materialism is dependent upon material conditions. In other words, it is the base, the economic development, that will determine the superstructure and the quality of one's consciousness. Are Bakha and Munoo Hegelian or Marxist figures? Are their consciousness superior to those of the upper classes? One may remember that Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* calls the aristocrats the barbarians and the bourgeois the philistines. How can the barbarians and the philistines, the perpetrators of anarchy, be supposed to have better consciousness? For Arnold, it is the awakened populace, the working class, who have better consciousness and who are the arbiters of an ideal classless society.

One must also remember Wordsworth's presumptive thesis about the superiority of the consciousness of his fishermen and leech-gatherers. Bakha has no doubt a cleaner and more authentic consciousness, but the irony is that he is unable to develop any sense of Hegelian identity. However, Bakha does see the unbridgeable gap between the two worlds, his own world of servitude and the exalted world of the master, wondering if any progressive plan of restructuring a new social order will recognise the need of uniting the two worlds.

The fact remains that both Bakha and Munoo are slaves, and their tragic existences are controlled by the baggage of work. While work in the Hegelian sense must engender transforming presence and universal consciousness, in the Marxist sense, however, it must be valued in terms of its contribution to material progress.

In the case of Bakha especially, it must be recognised that since bhanghis (sweepers) are permanently dissociated from the structure of a civil society and since they are unpropertied and without any authoritative status in the social order, the Marxist conception of a worker, a proletariat, and a master is not fully applicable to the intricate structure of the Indian caste system. It must be readily admitted that both Bakha and Munoo are tragic figures of history because they are unable to free themselves from the repressive tyranny of history and tradition. The argument about the quality and the level of Bakha's and Munoo's collective consciousness remains unresolved; is this consciousness superior to that of their masters?

Here a mention must be made about Anand's long-standing association with British socialism, Marxism and other progressive movements of the thirties. Like all progressive liberal writers, Anand was deeply searching for theoretical models that would resolve the problems of human suffering, poverty, dominance and exploitation. One must understand the consequences of the repressive dominance superimposed on India by the colonial-imperial structure of the British Empire. Do Bakhas and Munoos have natural rights, human rights, bestowed by a social structure that is the product of colonial and neocolonial legacies of control, power and subjugation? Anand has categorically denied that he is a communist, but he was dubbed a "social realist," a label from which he tried to disassociate himself immediately on his return to India.

I have dealt with this subject elsewhere, but I must reiterate that during his twenty-five-year stay in England, Anand firmly believed in the philosophies of progressive socialism and later of humanism – not scientific or rational humanism but "neohumanism" (Anand's term). In *Apology for Heroism,* Anand categorically states that, like all other progressive liberals, he accepted Marxism, "but considered humanism, the view of the whole man, as the more comprehensive ideology". Anand had accepted Marx's basic hypothesis, "that social existence determines man's consciousness," but he maintains that he came "to socialism through Tolstoy, Ruskin, Morris and Gandhi… as an ethical creed, in so far as it was a protest against misery, ugliness and inequality" (184-85). Anand declares categorically, perhaps after Morris, that "socialism implies a spiritual change…" . Anand's conception of the "whole man" includes not only the world of desire, but also the risen consciousness that includes some of the most important human values – karuna (compassion), bhakti (devotion), love and truth.

It is indeed remarkable to note that Anand in placing the two metaphors in the centre of the western discourse has created a confrontational position very much like the one created by Conrad in *Heart of Darkness.* I mean the inseparableness of the historical, economic, philosophical and moral issues from each other. Although both Bakha and Munoo are labourers, it is Munoo's case in *Coolie* where Anand shows his consummate skill in the effective use of history and ideology to construct a highly evocative and extremely analytical metaphor from one of the most ordinary experiences of common life. He had done the same in the creation of Bakha, who has been ceaselessly pitted in the archetypal conflict between himself and the tyrannical society. Munoo has gone through different positions before embracing death: as a domestic servant, as a factory worker in Bombay, and finally as a rickshaw-puller in Simla. It could be argued that Coolie is Anand's youthful romance with British socialism and Marxism; the narrative and the central metaphor of coolie challenge the European political and economic thought. One might ask if Mill's conceptions of utilitarianism and liberty have any relevance to the Bakhas and the Munoos of the world as well as other repressed denisens of the colonial spaces.

What liberty and whose liberty? One can hardly forget E.M. Forster's candid admission about English liberty: "It is race-bound and it's classbound. It means freedom for the Englishman, but not for the subject races of his Empire". "Colonialism," remarks Young, "was a machine; a machine of war, of bureaucracy and administration, and above all, of power...". It must be noted that the last two stages of Munoo's journey conclusively show that the British colonial governance of India is largely responsible for the creation and perpetuation of slavery, poverty and suffering. It is at this point that one finds Anand almost aligning himself with Conrad's central thesis in *Heart of Darkness*: the entire issue of colonial imperialism turns out to be a nightmarish moral predicament in the figure of Kurtz.

Peter Burra's review of *Coolie* emphasises the universality of the metaphor of "coolie." The coolies declare in unison that, because of the "big sahib's greed", they remain "poor niggers" and that they permanently "belong to suffering". The principal interest of the English factory owners and the British subjects residing in India during the colonial era was not the welfare of the labouring class but the availability of the cheap labour of the Munoos. After all, India as a rural constituency of the British Empire must engender possibilities of economic advancement of the metropolis and, consequently, the strengthening of capitalism. Marx, as a student of history, had seen this extended analogy between capitalism and colonialism. In fact, Marx in his analysis of the British rule in India maintains that imperialism is "the highest stage of capitalism".

It may be argued that the true significance of the analytical metaphor of the coolie finally centres on moral grounds. Do economic advances speed up the pace of rebellion? Does genuine rebellion originate from its basic roots of poverty? In this respect, then, will the wealthier classes of people or nations be always interested in perpetuating poverty? To what extent can a group of people or a nation for that matter dehumanise another group or nation and keep it in permanent servitude for its own economic good, pleasure or comfort? The actual obliteration of a class or group of people may not be necessary because, in that case, there will not be any beneficiary of pity and anxiety. Indeed, although Munoo's death is a stern and tragic reminder of man's inhumanity to man, the ethical and sociopolitical debate on poverty and destitution is hardly concluded.

Anand has repeatedly said that he wrote *Coolie* in response to Kipling's *Kim*. Kipling's hero Kim, a child-hero, can knock down the giantised figure of a pathan and become an active pillar of the colonial empire. It should be remembered that both Kim and Munoo are orphans. But Anand's Munoo is a realistic hero, a tragic hero, a "hero-anti-hero"; he is fashioned after the English romantic child-hero whose innocence has been violated and whose direct confrontation with the life of continued exploitation, starvation and poverty proves to be fruitless and unproductive. After completing the full circle of his journey, Munoo finally comes back to the hills; Mrs. Mainwaring, a Eurasian, brings him as her servant to Simla, where he works as her rickshaw-puller. Essentially a hillboy from Kangra valley, Munoo travels to Daultpur and from thereon to Bombay and has had varied experiences, ranging from a domestic servant to a factory worker to a coolie and to a rickshaw-puller. It is during his work as coolie where he encounters challenging problems of a fierce and ugly competition with other coolies and is finally hurt by a car driven by Mrs. Mainwaring. In the story, Munoo receives inhuman and repelling treatment from his Indian masters, the foreign mill owners in Bombay and his compatriot coolies.

Thus, Anand presents a vivid picture of human misery – poverty, exploitation, hunger and disease. Munoo's experience as a child-servant is as disgusting as his other experiences. Indeed, the story of Munoo is a study in human suffering. It should be remembered that Munoo, being a Kshatriya by birth, does not carry the same baggage of untouchability as does Bakha. But Anand has successfully shown that his sufferings result from the combined forces of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and feudalism. Since the confrontational life in Bombay is centred on his direct experience as a worker, a labourer and a coolie, Munoo now knows the meaning of poverty, suffering and wretchedness. One of the most moving scenes in Bombay is the existence of pavement-dwellers and of poor workers who live in hutments with dirt, filth and unsanitary conditions around.

Anand's caustic irony in portraying the work of the rickshaw-pullers to transport the British sahibs and memsahibs up and down the hills in Simla only sharpens the centrality of the meaning of the metaphor of coolie – "For India was the one place in the world where servants still were servants...". The souls of the rickshawpullers loudly echo human cruelty, exploitation, subjugation and social injustice. The incantation uttered by the Bombay coolies, "We belong to suffering! We belong to suffering!", is fully reverberated by the destitution and misery of the rickshaw-pullers of Simla. Anand puts the entire issue of the exploitive use of labour in a direct moral context: "Old Gandhi refused to ride in a rickshaw as, he said, it hurt his soul to have to be borne in a carriage driven by human beings". Finally, Munoo dies of tuberculosis in Simla – unsung and unknown but freed from the life of wretchedness, abuse and poverty. Whereas Bakha's world of desire remained repressed, Munoo's unborn dream-world was permanently buried in the earth.

Did Bakha and Munoo fight for an established cause? What are Anand's motives in creating these two universal archetypes? Can the Bakhas and the Munoos of the world ever recover their lost human dignity within the Indian space and outside of it in other spaces in the universe? Is Anand's objurgation of casteism, capitalism, feudalism, colonialism and imperialism inspired by his optative vision of hope in man's ability to reconstruct a new social order? It must be understood that both Bakha and Munoo are sufferers and not rebels, that the novel *Untouchable* had the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi and a laudatory introduction by E.M. Forster, and that the novel *Coolie* was received enthusiastically by almost all British liberals.

It must also be noted that, whereas Bakha's work as a sweeper cannot be valued and negotiated primarily because of the politics of Hindu casteism, Munoo's work as a servant, factory worker and coolie is fully negotiable in the context of material production.

These two novels alone had given Anand the status of a revolutionary novelist. Anand fought persistently and uncompromisingly for equality, liberty and justice, and for the basic human needs in the newly emerging civil structures of colonial India and post-independence India. In fact, Anand maintains that the new humanism must include the fundamental human values of "the Buddhist karuna or compassion," bhakti and truth and a deep commitment to the ideal of human dignity. Can one's sense of social and public good and, hence, of social justice be directed by one's sense of moral good and the truth of the human condition? Niven's contention that Bakha's disgust and Anand's own disgust for that matter has only the "ideological solution" is apparently not supported by Anand. The stringent irony in Bakha's examination of the various sociopolitical and philosophical models as possible options is that none of these will guarantee true freedom and identity to marginalised groups of people within a civil society. It is somewhat ironic that both the metaphors of untouchable and coolie do not allow Hegelian reversal from a slave to a master. One's consciousness, Anand seems to affirm, derives its residual strength and transparency from a conflation of the ideologicalmaterialistic base and the moral base. "The necessity for the recognition of the world human values," remarks Anand, "is the cornerstone of humanism" (*Apology* 190).

And Anand asserts categorically and unapologetically: "There is no doubt in my mind that, among the fundamental values, the dignity of man is the highest". Does Anand's neohumanism mark distinct advancement over socialism and Marxism? What structure of civil society will guarantee the Bakhas and the Munoos their basic human dignity? There is however another way of looking at the nature of problem in Narasimhaiah's piercing observation: "The untouchables, Anand's art has made us see, are not Bakha and his sister but those others who called them so"

TWO LEAVES AND A BUD

Two Leaves and a Bud is a novel by Mulk Raj Anand first published in 1937. Like his other novels, this one also deals with the topic of oppression of the poor, and is about a peasant who tries to protect his daughter from a British soldier. The story is based in the tea plantations of Assam. The book was subsequently adapted to a Hindi film, *Rahi*, by Dev Anand and simultaneously released in English as *The Wayfarer*. The book depicts in detail the concept of *haves and have-nots* and the exploitation of one at the hand of the other, in pre-independence India.

THE SWORD AND THE SICKLE

The Sword and the Sickle is a novel by Mulk Raj Anand first published in 1942. Like his other novels, this one also deals with the topic of social and political structures, specifically, the rise of Communism. The title for the book was given to Anand by George Orwell. The novel was in keeping with British and American writings of the time. The book was the final part of the trilogy that included The Village and Across the Black Waters.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF AN INDIAN PRINCE

The Privata Life of an Indian Prince is a novel by Mulk Raj Anand first published in 1953. The book is classified as one of Anand's most impressive and important works. In keeping with his other writings dealing with the topic of social and political reform, this book deals with the abolition of the princely states system in India. While the novel is not an autobiography, like many of his earlier novels, it follows an autobiographical tone.

3

Economic Hardship and Emotional Humiliation in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

On the Life of Down-trodden Communities in India

The novel *Untouchable* is a fictional story set in the so-called outcastes colony outside of an unnamed town during the British rule and is based on the life of the most downtrodden, despised and oppressed section of Indian Society, the outcastes. The story is based on a single day in the life of Bakha, an 18 year old Bhangi, who is a toilet cleaner and a sweeper boy. This novel shows the realistic picture of society.

Bakha, the central character of this novel, is the representative of all the down-trodden society in Pre-Independence India. He is a universal figure to show the oppression, injustice and humiliation done to the whole community of the outcastes in India. He symbolises the hardships and humiliation which has been the fate of untouchables like him. He suffers because of his caste. With Bakha, the central character, there are other characters who also suffer because of their lower caste.

Aches and Agonies

The untouchables lived in mud-walled cottages huddled in a colony and the people who lived there were the scavengers, the leather workers, the washer men, the barbers, the grass-cutters, the sweepers and other outcastes.

The conditions which the untouchables are enforced into are really shocking though one can only share their aches and agonies. Their plight is so dire that even for the fulfillment of the basic needs like water-and food, they had to depend on the mercy of high-caste Hindus.

This novel is a faithful record and a transcription of the pathetic plight of untouchables who were subjected to immitigable social indignities only because of their lowly birth.

Bakha

Bakha was the son of Lakha, the jamadar of the sweepers and had to start his routine work with his father's cascade of abuses:

> "Get up. Ohe, you Bakhya, ohe, son of pig! …
>
> Are you up? Get up, you illegally begotten …

and also with his encounter with high caste people who cannot put up with his very sight. But he was hardworking and he never disobeyed his father despite his repugnance for him and his lifestyle.

Bakha worked in the barracks of a British regiment and was caught by the glamour of the white man s life. The British or Tommies as Bakha called them, treated him with respect despite his caste.

The simplest way for Bakha to imitate the Tommies was through "fashun" by which he learned the art of wearing trousers, breeches, coat, boots, etc. He was trying to rise above his caste by westernizing, yet he only received insults from his friends about his dress. They chided him for dressing like a *sahib* and trying to appear to be something he was not.

The Ordeal of Fetching Water from the Community Well

Sohini, Bakha's sister had to go to the community well to fetch water for her tired and thirsty brother. She had to wait near the well for a long time putting up with the lustful men. One of the Hindus, Pandit Kali Nath, drew water for her and called her to his house to clean the courtyard and tried to molest her. But when she shouted to protect herself, he cried out "polluted", "polluted". Bakha arrived at the scene only to remain a mute witness, though his first thought was to beat him up. He desperately went home and told his father:

> "They think we are mere dirt, because we clean their dirt".

Assaults in the Bazaar

Bakha had a few *annas* (coins) and wanted to buy some sweet to eat. He asked the shopkeeper to give him jalebis for four annas. The shopkeeper cheated him and, though Bakha knew it, he could not complain. The confectioner threw the packet like a cricket ball, placed the coins on the shoe-board for his assistant to splash some water on them and Bakha walked away embarrassed. As he was eating the sweet with delight, he touched a man without his consciousness. The touched man abused him, gathered a crowd around him and said that he should have warned him of his approach as:

"Posh, Posh, sweeper coming"

Suddenly one child said that he had beaten children. Though Bakha tried to defend that it was a lie, nobody voiced support him.

> "To Bakha, every second seemed an endless age of woe and suffering. His whole demeanour was concentrated in humility, and in his heart there was a queer stirring".

The touched man slapped him and disappeared. Bakha lost his humility for a while but self revelation came to him later when he realised that he was an untouchable.

Polluting the Place of Gods

The defiant consciousness or the "faint stirrings of rebellion" which had started in Bakha by the slapping incident began to take an articulate form. He entered the temple courtyard to clean it. He became inquisitive to see the hidden mystery in the temple and to know the reason why people came there to worship.

He advanced towards the stairs with a determined step but went back to collect the heaps of rubbish. He then strengthened his will and reached the top step and had glimpse of the hidden mystery. But a Brahmin who was standing below shouted "polluted, polluted, polluted". Immediately, the crowd of people in the temple shouted that he had defiled their whole service.

Woeful Living

The Bhangis had to clean different houses and the owners gave them some bread to eat. This was their means to get their food. Bakha had to remain content with the *rottis* thrown at him by the high caste Hindus. The bread fell on the ground and he picked it up and wrapped it in a duster with the other bread he had received. Charat Singh, the Havildar, gifted Bakha with a hockey stick and when he was playing with the others, a small child got wounded. Bakha picked him up in his arms and took him to the hall of his house to save him. But the child's mother only said:

> "You have defiled my house, besides wounding my son."

Though Bakha tried to do something good, he was only abused and insulted.

Reasoning, Rationalisation, Demands

Deprived of hope and fed up with humiliations, Bakha had a difficult day and had to leave his house. He then had three options placed in front of him. First, a Christian missionary invited him to join Christianity so that the untouchability based on the caste could be removed. But Bakha did not like the idea of being called a sinner. He also felt that the religion of his father was in no way inferior to Christianity. Here, the author suggests that replacing one faith with another will not solve the problem of untouchability and their sufferings but will only further complicate the matter.

The second option was the idea of sacrifice from Mahatma Gandhi, who came there to preach against the discrimination of the lower caste. Gandhi recounted the story of a Brahmin boy and a sweeper in his ashram. The Brahmin said to the sweeper that to do his work well, he must do it himself and set an example. This action while appearing to be sympathetic and understanding, only undermines the very existence of an untouchable because it assumes that they are incapable of doing such menial work well. Gandhi then criticised the untouchables by saying that they have to cultivate habits of cleanliness, must get rid of their evil habits such as drinking liquor, gambling, eating deadmeat and also not to accept leftovers from the plates of high caste Hindus. But Bakha feels and says:

> "but now, now the Mahatma is blaming us. That is not fair".

This suggests that the author's view of Gandhi and his political rhetoric cannot be idealised because it too contains elements of oppression and humiliation.

The third option as a solution to the entire problem was the flush system. Mulk Raj Anand considered that the caste system can only prevail with the job one carried and the easy way to remove it is to upgrade the work environment and bring dignity to each work so that they are economically uplifted and are no more humiliated.

Is Change At Hand?

Thus, the novel *Untouchable* is the story of Bakha who was all enthusiastic and had his own set of dreams. His dreams varied from to dress like a Tommie (Englishman) and also to play hockey. However, his limited means and the circumstances forced him to literally beg for food and get humiliated in each turn of the road.

The nature of their work pulled down bhangis to the last of the table of castes. They were not permitted even to take water from a well. The food was given to them by throwing and if they touched anybody by accident, they were punished. The upper class, however, did not find any untouchability when they molest/molested girls or women from untouchable communities. It is a typical day in the life of the Bhangi, mixed with hunger, hope, small pleasures, humiliations and setbacks.

By the character of Sohini, the author tried to picture the lower caste females. She is the passive sufferer of humiliation. It seems that according to the novel, the only way to alleviate untouchability must come from something beyond the untouchables control and understanding. As E.M. Forster suggests:

> "His Indian day is over and the next day will be like it, but on the surface of the earth if not in the depths of the sky, a change is at hand".

4

The Theme of Oppression in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the greatest novelists in Indian Writing in English. He is also attributed to constitute the much talked about and referred to 'trio' in Indian Writing in English, the other two being R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao. Indian literature including that in English indulged before the advent of Munshi Premchand (in Hindi) and the trio in Indian Writing in English in mere imagination. Hence, India was looked upon as being a land of forests, jugglers and snakes by Europeans. Indian literature prior to these literatures pre-occupied in history and romance only. It was way too far removed from reality and the people living in the Indian society. The trio endeavoured to eradicate Indian literature in English from being called literature of fairy tales and fantasy.

R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Tagore tried, through literature, to voice the suffering and coercion against the Indian subject in the British Raj, trying thus to bring a tinge of realism to the literature. But, be it as it may, Mulk Raj Anand was a little different from them. He was profoundly influenced by Gandhiji, his ethics and his way of life. One thing remains to be seen that there is a decided difference of view between R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand.

The former essentially projects in his novels the middle class; whereas the latter attempts to expose the age old agony and anguish of the downtrodden and the aggrieved section in the Indian society. Mahatma Gandhiji once said that untouchability and casteism are the most indelible stigmas on Hinduism. It is a truism that evils like casteism and untouchability which have survived in the Indian society have fraught and marred it. Even though efforts by social reformers, over the years and centuries, were made, the evils could not be obliterated. Mulk Raj Anand arrived on the literary horizon in India in the nineteen thirties .The nineteen thirties in India were politically hectic. Mahatma Gandhiji launched the Satyagraha Movements in nineteen thirty. Then, there were the three Round Table Conferences. The entire nation was stirred and moved by the conferences. There then was the passing of the Government of India Act of nineteen thirty five. The Gandhian movements for the redemption and amelioration of the untouchables whom he called 'Harijan – children of God' subsequently transpired. India, in the year nineteen thirty six, witnessed elections to the State Assemblies in terms of the nineteen thirty five Government of India Act.

In a nutshell, India, in the nineteen thirties, was a 'melting pot'. He observed the rampant discrimination against these most unfortunate sections of the Indian society by the caste touchables. The untouchables were not entitled even to the minium human requirements, let alone other civic amenities.

Mulk Raj Anand, though born in a high caste in the hierarchy of the Hindu social order, keenly saw and felt the atrocities and suppression to which these sub-humans were subjected for ages together. He himself recognises in his preface to Two Leaves and a Bud (1937) that all the heroes and heroines in his literary ventures are dear to him because they are reflections of real people and that he had known them in his childhood and youth. He further goes onto say that they are the flesh of his flesh and the blood of his blood.

He was thoroughly obsessed with these people in the society. His literary projection is of the people whose life is damnably tied with pain, social injustice, humiliation, affront and insult from womb to tomb. The untouchables, who lived in a 'ghetto', had pain and woe as their destiny. Mulk Raj Anand observed the milieu, the plight and the predicament of the untouchables and reflected them in totto in his novelistic adventures. However, it has to be conceded with remorse that this anathema of casteism and untouchability has not obliterated to the fullest. The present paper endeavours to thematically study Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936) and The Road (1961) with regard to the suppression against the untouchables and the marginalised in the Indian society by the so-called upper caste touchables even in today's context. Untouchable, Mulk Raj Anand's debut novel and magnum opus, is a unique novel. It, in the Joycean 'stream of consciousness' technique, describes the events in a single day in the life of Bakha, the protagonist in the novel, in the town of Balushah. Bakha, an untouchable boy, is a victim of the caste ridden society.

He belongs to the sweeper community. He has a hefty physique and muscles, "Each muscle of body, had as a rock when it came to play, seemed to shine forth like glass. What a dexterous workman! The on looker would have said. And though his job was dirty, he remained comparatively clean". But, he is reluctant to perform what he is supposed and compelled to. He has to clean toilets and bring about sanitation at the cost of his own hygiene. Every now and then he is disparaged and called "defiled and polluted". He is only a beast of burden in the eyes of the highly prejudiced society. His sister, too, has to dance attendance to the houses of the touchables for chores and return humiliated. In utter desperation and exasperation, he tells his father, "They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt". The society is not at all considerate to him even if he offers a helping hand to it. On an occasion, Bakha is playing hockey. A little boy is injured and as Bakha lifts the boy up, his indignant mother screams - Polluted, polluted.

He is utterly despaired. He envisages a ray of hope when Mahatma Gandhiji visits the place and calls upon people to regard the untouchables as 'Harijan- man of God'. The Mahatma also exhorts people not to observe the social evils in their lives. There are many occasions in the novel which reveal the stark and naked realities in the society. One such occasion is when the untouchables are victimised, ravished and their morale shattered into pieces. The 'Well Incident' in the novel poignantly describes how these ill – fated people are usurped by the so-called high class touchables. Bakha's sister once goes to the village well for fetching water.

She waits to be given a little water from the well, as she is not allowed, being untouchable, to touch anything there. Ultimately, the village priest does the needful and asks her to come to his house for cleaning. But, seeing nobody around, when she goes to his house, he tries to molest her. The priest tries to fish in the troubled waters. The crueler think is when people gather, the priest impenitently indicts the innocent girl that she has defiled his religion. If we view the incident from a humanitarian perspective, we must say that might is right. The untouchables, being weak, have no justice. The priest is supposed to preach the gospel of truth, humanity and morality. But, he turns out to be a victimiser, a tyrant. On many occasions, Bakha and his family are subjected to humiliatory treatment. The 'Bazar-Incident' is also equally convincing and touching. Bakha has to undergo every insult that comes in his stride. His only crime is that he casually and naively touches a caste Hindu in the market. For it, he is ill-treated in the words –'swine dog', 'dirty dog', 'you brute'. Bakha is unable to retaliate and has to listen and bend down his head, mumbling something. We commiserate with Bakha when the man says:

> "This dirty dog bumped right into me". Likewise, the 'Temple- Incident' is also equally moving and begets our sympathy for the sufferer. Bakha is a

> type and an individual as well. He is characteristic of the repressed, depressed and underprivileged class. He is one of many unlucky ones whose fate is pain and is destined to undergo affronts, humiliation and mortification by the touchables. These untouchable people find themselves out of place, out of society and remain damnable somewhere or other even today.

Coolie is the second novel which Mulk Raj Anand penned in nineteen thirty six. It is a sequel to Untouchable. Coolie is acclaimed to be a folk epic of modern India. The protagonist in the novel, like Bakha, is an untouchable boy, Munoo. Coolie is a contemptuous word in India, like the word untouchable.

It mars human dignity. The novel is ramified into five chapters. It is an exhaustive saga which details on how Munoo, right from his childhood, is entangled into hardships unless he precipitates and eventually succumbs to consumption. Munoo is an orphan boy living with his unloving and uncaring uncle and aunt. He is made to be a page to dance attendance to his employer Baboo Nathoo Ram. At the very outset, he is admonished – "You are their servant and they are big people". He is reproached for bringing in rustic manners. Being denied the flushing lavatory, he relieves in open for which he is highly repentant. He leaves the house and joins a pickle factory at Daulatapur. He is a little relieved here, when he says- "I want to live , I want to know , I want to work, to work this machine". But, unfortunately, his benefactor becomes bankrupt. He, eventually, becomes a coolie in the market yard and a porter at the station. There is a sharp sense of pathos in the lines below, indicating the mental thraldom of the menials:

> "The bodies of numberless coolies lay strewn in tattered garbs. Someone curled up in knots, others lay faced downwards on folded arms, others were

> flat on their chests, pillowing their heads on their bundles or boxes, others crouched into corners talking, others still huddled together at the doors steps, or lay on the boards in a sleep which looked like death, but that it was broken by deep sights". Munoo's life gradually becomes episodic. He joins a depraved Yogi for sometime to earn his livelihood.

He encounters an elephant trainer in a circus. With the help of the elephant trainer, he reaches Bombay. However, he gets coiled in hardships everywhere. He turns out to be an object of perennial exploitation. That is why, he is given a warning – "The bigger a city is, the more cruel it is to the sons of Adam". An innocent lad like Munoo, who frolicked on the hills with a taste for the joy of life, has to experience life on pavements and in slums. But, he is not a boy to give in so easily. He has to work in Sir George White Cotton Mills. He is involved in the activities there. The strike of labourers takes a serious communal twist and riots escalate. With a view to escaping a possible police action, he runs up the hills and is knocked down by a car. The owner of the car is an unscrupulous lady. She harnesses Munoo as her rickshaw-puller and page. Exhausted with the struggle for existence, he is seriously afflicted with consumption.

Eventually, he succumbs to the malady. K.R.S. Iyengar rightly comments – "India depicted in coolie is a dismal, superficial, terrifying India – the India that western impact on the orient has laboured to evolve, the life of labourers within and without their factories, the spectacle of men and women sleeping on the pavements of a Bombay street, the tragedy of Hindu – Muslim differences, something of all this is vigorously portrayed by Anand".

Munoo's exploitation is symbolically the exploitation of the poor. Munoo's predicament is characteristically that of the proletariats. In the fond hope of survival, he moves from village to town, from town to city, from city to Bombay and finally from Bombay to Shimla. At the same time, he comes across a score of people. The action of internalisation and indoctrination takes place in the case of Munoo. It is the given self of Munoo which overpowers his inner and innate self. It is not his consciousness that determines the course of his action. Rather, it is the social reality that gives effect to and moulds his consciousness. He eventually turns out to be a creature of circumstance.

Mulk Raj Anand's The Road , written in 1961, also deals with the theme of untouchability. Bhikhu, the protagonist in the novel, is a revelation of Bakha of·Untouchable. Bhikhu is a road worker, thus helping sort out the difficulty of transportation. The work in progress is done under the patronage of Dhooli Singh, a caste Hindu from the Govardhan village. He shows sympathy for the untouchables. The landlord is jealous of the untouchables for the prosperity they are making. The houses of the untouchables are set on fire. Bhiku leaves the village and goes along the road to Delhi. It is a transformed and transmuted world with a conflict between tradition and modernity. Road symbolises progress. Bhiku's departure from his village stands for the fragmentation of the village community and the agrarian society.

There are many writers in Indian Writing in English who have dealt with the theme of untouchability and segregation. But nobody has been able even to come near Mulk Raj Anand. He handles the theme with great penetration and affinity. He pierces into their hearts and operates like an expert physician, repudiating the mal-treatment imparted to this erroneously supposed squalor and filth in the Indian society. The age old problem of untouchability and casteism has really been insurmountable. Anand's novels do not carry any grudge against any individual. Rather, his grievance is against the society at large.

5

Social Realism in *Untouchable* and Coolie

Mulk Raj Anand has painted *Untouchable* and *Coolie* with the colors of social realism. These two novels are hard core reality of the Indian society of early decades of twentieth century. These two novels describe the sufferings of the protagonists, and record the miseries felt by them. These two pieces have together occupied a special place in Indian literature. *Untouchable* and *Coolie* give a voice to the predicament of the mute humanity in vicious circumstances. The suffering is not caused by fate but by fellow human and the social surroundings from which the sufferers still have great and immortal hopes for betterment of life. *Untouchable* and *Coolie* are the sagas of suffering of the protagonists - Bakha and Munoo.

Anand is considered a reformer; he does so because it is one of his aims to disturb his readers complacency to shock them out of conventional attitudes, and encourage them to make a fresh approach to experience. In *Untouchable* it is that of a progressive revolutionary, of a humanist who is all compassion for the working, downtrodden classes, and the social outcastes. Being a realist whose social realism has an unmistakable streak of Marxism in it, he carries his readers along, wins their confidence and establishes a close, harmonious relationship with them as well as with his characters.

Anand lays stress on the demands of the present; he refuses to be bound by stale custom and orthodoxy. In fact, his novels convey emotional truths as well as social realities and the beauty of his art of fiction is well realised by way of analysis and interpretation of social problems and of corrupt practices in *Coolie, Untouchable, The Big Heart and Two Leaves And A Bud*. He combines wide experience with architectonic skill, cosmic vision with objective truth, as in *Coolie*, a novel instinct with epic amplitude and magnificence. It is a fact that he never allows idealism to eclipse his vision of social reality.

Like Premchand, Anand too is a serious novelist and passionate reformer, a critic of life who traces the roots of social injustice and moral degradation to the disruption based on co-operation and brotherhood and the growth of inequality and tyranny based on caste and class scruples.

Anand garnered a ripe harvest of experience before he assayed his first attempt at story telling, despite the early age at which he has published *Untouchable*. True, he did not resort to any literary vivisection by allowing his realism to include every biographical and biological factor, record every breath, and analyse every individual thought of his characters, but none would question the skill with which he observes life in essential detail and describe it with an accuracy rarely exceeded. He was born into an atmosphere redolent with dissatisfaction of things as they were an atmosphere into which he infused his ardent belief that things could be bettered. In practice, therefore, he rejected the theory of art for art's sake; for there is abundant evidence that he was supremely conscious of a mission and that he definitely started out in many of his novels to reform abuses and right wrongs by means of subtle propaganda. He was democrats with a passion for humanity.

Anand appears to be universal in respect of the lower classes only. Just as no writer before Dickens had handled the English people, similarly no Indo-English writer before Anand had devoted so sustained and sympathetic an attention to the poor masses, outcastes and the neglected lot of the society. Anand was born in an age when moralizing was unusually popular and at the same time he had plenty to moralise about, the revolt against. He delights in the painting of those elements of human nature which call forth the common emotions of mankind like tears, anger, joy, sorrow, pity, sympathy, compassion and so on.

In *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, Anand reveals the curse of untouchability, exploitation, child labor, social governance, social set up of society, customs, religion belief, prejudices and the theme of the miserable masses is studied in a rural and urban setting where hunger and starvation are caused by the operation of natural forces.

This is nothing but a reflection of the society. Both these novels deal with the theme of untouchability, exploitation, poverty, hunger and the suffering of the Indian masses. The theme of suffering caused by vicious circumstances in life has been realistically depicted, and the heroic struggle of the central figures, against heavy odds, raises the novels to the lofty heights of an epic.

Untouchable and *Coolie* are called epics of social realism as they have all the qualities of great epics though in different ways. According to the ancient Greeks, the epic is a narrative poem, longer in scope and sise, having a divine inspiration. The characters in an epic poem can be partly human and partly divine.

In epics, the action should be complete and grand. An epic hero is not an ordinary person. *Untouchable* and *Coolie* have the same qualities of epics. Francis H. Stoddard writes about novel which Sharma quotes as:

> A novel is a narrative of human life under the stress of emotion. It differs from the epic in that. It is a narration of human rather than super human life, under the stress of ordinary rather than of excessive or heroic emotion.

In this sense, modern novel is closer to the epic in its endeavor of portraying modern man's predicament in a hostile environment. Novel tends to assume the form of an epic of common man in an ordinary every day life. It realistically describes the various aspects of life. In this sense, *Untouchable* has epic dimensions as it deals with epic struggle of the Indian untouchable or the social backward class against the established social order and on other hand, *Coolie,* the life history of Munoo is the life history of starving millions of India who are beaten from pillar to post, and being over worked and treated as beasts of burden, they die prematurely of hunger, suffering and disease. Munoo is a universal figure, a larger than life character, and one who represents the suffering and starving millions of India.

Like Dostoevasky's The Idiot, Charles Dicken's *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, Premchand's *Godan*, Mulk Raj Anand has created a unique protagonist Bakha in *Untouchable* and Munoo in Coolie.

In *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, Mulk Raj Anand presents the Indian downtrodden and laborers with their problems – social rejection, poverty, starvation, poor health, misery, death and humiliation. Anand's immortal creation of the protagonist Bakha and Munoo represent Indian society. One finds that in Bakha's life at each stage, tragedy deepens and intensifies, without any respite. Bakha is a poor untouchable, tradition-follower who is an idealist and cannot think of going against society, religion, beliefs and the 'agents' of religious institutions.

Anand has taken the theme of his novels from real life and so his novel is nothing but social realism. He brought to fictional life Bakha, his boyhood companion, the untouchable sweeper boy, in *Untouchable.*

Anand's mother abused Bakha for 'polluting' her son when Bakha carried home a bleeding Anand, hurt by a stone. Bakha is reviled by caste Hindus as he cleans latrines; but

Anand captures Bakha's pride in his work: he tackles his odious job with a conscientiousness that invests his movement with beauty. The novel was not only a powerful social tract, but a remarkable technical feat as in a single days' action the author builds round his hero a spiritual crisis broad enough to embrace the whole of India. Forster wrote in its introduction: "It has gone straight to the heart of its subject and purified it."

Anand continued his interest in social themes with his next few novels dealing with the destiny of the working class in India. *Coolie* centered on Munoo, an orphan boy dying of tuberculosis brought on by malnutrition. It exposes the whole system through its victim's tale of exploitation. Even in the dreariest of surroundings, the little hero retains his qualities of warm-heartedness, love, comradeship and curiosity. In *The Village*, inspired by the experience of Anand's mother's family whose land was taken away by the landlord of the village, the novelist explores the state of the poor peasantry under British rule.

The underdog protagonists Bakha and Munoo sail in the same boat as far as personal suffering is concerned. There is a similar central theme in *Untouchable* and *Coolie* – social exploitation, the exploitation of the poor and the underprivileged by the forces of capitalism, industrialism and colonialism. In Anand's *Coolie*, Munoo is denied his fundamental right to life and happiness and is exploited and made to suffer, till he dies of consumption. The novelist makes it quite clear that Munoo is not the only victim of such exploitation. He represents millions of those for whom such exploitation and denial of life and happiness is the lot of everyday life. The lot of the poor is equally wretched and miserable whether in rural or urban India. Whether in a village like Bilaspur or small town like Sham Nagar or big cities like Daulatpur and Bombay the story of suffering is the same.

Such painful journey of Bakha and Munoo is a unique feature for the study of comparative aspects found beautifully woven in these extra ordinary epics of miseries by Anand. Both the novels have similarities in their social background, exploitation by landlords and masters, ill fate created by surroundings, social beliefs, cumulative torture, unfulfilled desires from life. Yet the protagonists make constant though painful journey in life with the hope of betterment and at last both Bakha and Munoo are crushed under heavy burdens of life and get disintegrated into ashes with the so called pure and religious dust of mother India.

Mulk Raj Anand has presented the miserable condition of social backward class and coolies in India. Both these novels have been written with a purpose. These novels are powerful indictment of modern capitalistic Indian society and feudal system with the shameless and tragic exploitation of the underdog and poor. Both the protagonists want to live but the society does not allow them to live. They die of exploitation, poverty and hunger. If the poor are treated humanely, most of the social problems can be solved easily. Humanism is the only solution to the problems.

The theme of the novel - untouchability it self is very realistic. *Untouchable* is a realistic novel of socially crushed protagonist Bakha. It is a slice from a life with out any modification. The novel begins with a realistic picture of the outcastes' colony. The local color of the novel is evoked with the photographic realism and accuracy. Anand describes The outcastes' colony was a group of mudwalled houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment, but outside their boundaries and separate from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather-workers, the washer men, the barbers, the water carriers, the grasscutters and other outcastes from Hindu society. A brook ran near the lane, once with crystal clear water, now soiled by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcasses left to dry on its banks, the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes.

This realistic description is what Anand himself has seen and presented as it is. This mode of realistic description continues throughout the novel. Anand has painted the realistic colony where untouchables and other outcaste people stay and wait to be humiliated by others caste Hindu. From the description of the novel, it looks like that Anand has spent a day with Bakha and observed it minutely. It is very much real and true. Bakha's day starts as writes; Bakha thought of the uncongeniality of his of his home as he lay half awake in the morning of an autumn day, covered by a worn-out, greasy blanket, on a faded blue carpet which was spread on the floor in a corner of the cavelike, dingy, dank, one-roomed mud house. His sister slept on a cot next to him and his father and brother snored from under a patched, ocher-coloured quilt, on a broken string bed, on the other side.

This is the reality what one can see in the hut of an untouchable. Anand observes and presents the real photographic picture. Usually Bakha's day starts with scold of his father Lakha, the jamadar of all the sweepers in the town and the cantonment. Bakha dreams to have everything like Britishers. Anand starts narrating Bakha's desire to look like Britishers which is very much real to the colonial mind of Indian untouchable.

Bakha had looked at the Tommies, stared at them with wonder and amasement when he first went to live at the British regimental barracks with his uncle. He had had glimpses, during his sojourn there, of the life the Tommies lived: sleeping on strange, low canvas beds covered tightly with blankets; eating eggs, drinking tea and wine in tin mugs; going to parade and then walking down to the bazaar with cigarettes in their mouths and small silver-mounted canes in their hands. And he had soon become possessed with an overwhelming desire to live their life.

But it was dream and desire very far from the reality for Bakha. His day starts with the 'rude bullying order to get up from his father; Get up, ohe you Bakhiya, ohe son of a pig!' came his father's voice, sure as the daylight, from the midst of a broken, jarring, interrupted snore. Get up and attend to the latrines or the sepoys will be angry.

Anand has used such words which are very much real and by using in Indian tone, he wants to make it very realistic. Bakha is in duty to clean latrine officially he is in charge of the three rows of public latrines which lined the extreme end of the colony. Anand observes; Men came one after another, towards the latrines. Most of them were Hindus, naked, except for the loin-cloth, brass jugs in hand and with the sacred thread twisted round their left ears. Occasionally came a Muhammadan, who wore a long, white cotton tunic and baggy trousers, holding a big copper kettle in his hand.

Bakha finishes his job and returns to his hut as he is thirsty and wants to drink water but found empty pitcher as there was no water. Anand describes the problem of untouchability-the social curse. The caste people keep physical distance with untouchable and treat them socially backward. Anand presents the real picture of the harsh reality and the curse of untouchability.

The water episode is very heart rendering. Anand's powerful observation, use of real and local language, use of abuses and the naked picture of the curse-untouchability clearly indicts social realism. Sohini treated badly by the caste Hindu. She waits long for chance to bring some caste Hindu to the well that gets her pitcher filled with water untouchables don't have their well. Anand writes:

> The outcastes were not allowed to mount the platform surrounding the well, because if they were ever to draw water from it, the Hindus of the three upper castes would consider the water polluted. Nor were they allowed access to the nearby brook

> as their use of it would contaminate the stream. They had no well of their own because it cost a lot of money to dig a well in such a hilly town as Bulandshahr.

Perforce they had to collect at the foot of the caste Hindu's well and depend on the bounty of some of their superiors to pour water into their pitchers.

Such humiliation is common for untouchable and they have accepted as it is age old tradition. Even she waited a lot to have her turn and other outcastes also waited but they can not touch the well but have to wait for class Hindu to give them water. Anand writes:

> She had come as fast as she could to the well, full of fear and anxiety that she would have to wait her turn since she could see from a distance that there was already a crowd. She didn't feel disappointed so much as depressed to realise that she would be the eleventh to receive water. She had sensed the feeling in her brother's soul. He was tired. He was thirsty.

She had felt like a mother as she issued from her home to fetch water, a mother going out to fetch food and drink for her loved ones at home. Now as she set in a row with her fellow sufferers, her heart sank. There was no sign of anyone passing that way that could be a possible benefactor. This realistic picture is on one hand appreciated for Anand's art of narration and on other hand make us compassionate for the ill-treatment with untouchables. Gulaboo, the washerwoman being jealous of Sohini abuses her:

> 'Think of it! Think of it! Bitch! Prostitute!
>
> Wanton! And your mother hardly dead. Think of laughing on my face, laughing at me who an old enough to be your mother. Bitch!' the washer woman exploded......

> 'Ari, bitch! Do you take me for a buffoon? What are you laughing at, slut? Aren't you ashamed of showing your teeth to me in the presence of men, prostitute?

Such treatment with outcaste people was common in the early decades of twentieth century in India. This is the reality and Anand has depicted as it is in his novel.

Anand also through light on the hypocrisy and lustfulness of pretentious so called priest by the character of Pt. Kalinath who believe to be polluted by the touch of untouchable and has strong sexual desire with Sohini, an untouchable.

This duality and hypocrisy revealed by Anand in the novel. Pundit has 'dead over her'; he is 'one of the priest in-charge of the temple in the town'. He is attracted by Sohini's 'fresh, young form whose full breast with their dark breads of nipples stood out so conspicuously under her muslin shirt'. It is his evil intention that urges him to ask Sohini to come to clean the courtyard of his house at the temple.

Sohini innocently goes to do so, he catches her by her breast but she refuses his suggestions. He then raises an alarm of; 'Polluted, Polluted, Polluted!' shouted the Brahmin below.....

> Get off the steps, scavenger! Off with you! You have defiled our whole service! You have defiled our temple! Now we will have to pay for the purificatory ceremony.

This is the height of the hypocrisy. It is the age old tyranny and injustice done to untouchable in India. Here Bakha is in extreme pain as he could not do anything to Pundit and angry on one hand and on other finds miserable to have such a beautiful sister. It is a curse to have beautiful sister as people look toward the lustfulness and he could not do anything. He says:

> My poor sister! How can she show her face to the world after this? But why didn't she let me go and kill that man? Why was she born a girl in our house, to bring disgrace upon us? So beautiful! So beautiful and so accursed! I wish she had been the ugliest woman in the world.

Then no one would have teased her! But he couldn't bear the thought of her being ugly! His pride in her beauty seemed to be hurt. And he just wished: 'Oh, God, why was born, why she was born'. Then, however, he saw her bending and wiping her eyes with her apron. With a sudden burst of tenderness and humility he gripped her arm close and dragged her along, writhing with the conflicts in his soul.

This compassionate feeling not only described by Anand but also seems to be felt through the soul of Bakha. His tears converted into words and heart feels pity on such miserable untouchables. Here Anand deserve salute from reader for narrating beautiful interwoven piece of art which is real as it came out directly from the society he has seen.

The ill-treatment with Bakha by the caste Hindu is very harsh. He passes through the 'inferno' created through the social hierarchy. Anand describes the misery and humiliation of Bakha by the real words which is utmost reality of our society. He has to keep physical distance from Hindu and has to shout: Posh, Posh, sweeper coming so that they save themselves from defiled by the touch of untouchable. This ritual or tradition was age old in India. Bakha is slapped by a caste Hindu for "polluting" him. He failed to announce himself as usual and 'pollutes' a caste Hindu unconsciously though and in return receives the torrent of abuses;

> "why don't you call, you swine, and announce your approach! Do you know you have touched me and defiled me, cock-eyed son of a bowlegged scorpion! Now I will have to go and take a bath to

> purify myself. And it was a new dhoti and shirt I put on this morning!

He further abuses:

> Swine, dog, why didn't you shout and warn me of your approach! he shouted as he met Bakha's eyes. Don't you know, you brute, that you must not touch me!

This wounds him psychologically and makes him ponder over the humiliating segregation of the man from man by the restrictive imperatives of a social order which has apparently become outdated and irrelevant Bakha did not mind scavenging for others, but what makes him in vigil against the whole social system is the desire to see that it changes to accommodate every one in its system. He has the potential to hit back but his anger gets considered in to an indifference and obedience as he becomes conscious of the fact that a vast majority of out caste too are subjected to the same kind of dehumanisation as he is. But two thousand years of continual suppression and intimidation of his race have not exhausted his humility, and he tries to suffer from these social humiliations with an exemplary tolerance that is not untypical of a tragic hero.

Anand has a remarkable sympathy for his hero who symbolises the predicament of a miserable victim pitted against the forces of orthodoxy and conservatism. In one of the incidents when Bakha receives both abuses and pancakes thrown at him by a housewife from the house-top, Anand seems to get the better hold to lay bare the real inhumanity to which the untouchables are subjected; they are treated as subhuman species between humans and dogs:

> 'Vay, eater of your masters', she shouted, 'may the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence. May you perish and die! You have defiled my house! Go! Get up, get up! Eater of your masters! Why

> don't you shout if you wanted food? Is this your father's house that you come and rest here?

She further adds:

> But, eater of your masters! Why did you sit down on my doorstep, if you had to sit down at all? You have defiled my religion! You should have sit there in the gully. Now I will have to sprinkle holy water all over the house. Spoiler of my salt! Oh, how terrible! You sweepers have lifted your heads to the shy, nowadays.

At last she throws the bread to Bakha from the top of her house like some one throws breads to dogs from distance. She says:

> Vay Bakhiya, take this. Here's your bread coming down.' And she flung it at him.

Anand narrates such humiliation in real words and his pan picture has great quality as it is derived from the society. Anand has used real Indian words to make the novel real. After much humiliation, at noon time Bakha reaches home as he is very hungry. Here Anand writes:

> Meanwhile he began to feel hungry as if rats were running around in his bell, searching for food. He began to spit a while flocculent spittle on the dust as he hurried out of the town.

But the final outburst came out from Bakha is heart compassionate. It looks like that Anand was waiting to write the outburst of Bakha; even 'Bakha burst out with an explosion more sudden than the manner in which he was normally wont to utter a speech': They insulted me this morning; they abused me because as I was walking along a man happened to touch me. He gave me a blow.

And a crowd gathered round me, abusing and' they think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt. That pundit in the temple tried to molest Sohini and then came shouting:

> "Polluted, polluted." The woman of the big house in the silversmith's gully threw the bread at me from the forth storey. I won't go down to the town again. I have done with this job".

For Bakha, these incidences make his blood boil. He feels a wild desire to retaliate. And yet there is a futility written on his face. He knows that he will not cross the boundaries drawn by the tradition. The incitements of touching and the attempt of the temple priest to rape his sister Sohini to surrender her chastity poisons all that happens subsequently.

Anand is social reformist and scientific humanistic so in the novel he projects real theme, real problem and real solution. He has concern with downtrodden so he has raised the issues, realise the reader to have pity and compassion for untouchables and finally Anand provides solution to remove untouchability. Bakha finds three solutions to his problems. He may become a Christian with the help of Hutchinson, the Salvation Army Missionary.

He has been happy to hear from Hutchison that Christ receives all men and that Yessuh Messih makes no difference between the Brahmin and the Bhangi. The second solution is that he may take comfort in Gandhiji's Chastisement of the caste Hindus and wait till the social conscience of the people is roused. Hard upon this comes the third solution: the introduction of the water – closet, as promised by the poet, which makes the task of the sweepers easy. Bakha thinks of everything he has heard and returns to his mud-walled hut, with the desire to tell his father all what Gandhi said about them and what the clever poet said about the flush system. Thus, the novel ends with a resounding note of optimism implied as it is Bakha's adolescent dreams, when he sees an apostle in Gandhi. Bakha's dream may come true or may not but this life of unending toil goes on.

By the realistic, sensitive and compassionate portrayal of an individual, Mulk Raj Anand displays his penetrating thought and humane attitude in understanding the grim realities of the social life in India. It is a revolutionary novel in the sense that it has outcaste as its chief protagonist and by the protagonist, Anand projects all untouchables in India and their day to day problems in real life. He wants to remove the evil of caste system and wants to create in readers an urgent awareness of the dehumanizing social evil, to stir the springs of tenderness in them, and to rally them for the removal of these evils in order that a desirable or a just social order may come into being.

Social realism found in every aspects of the novel. Anand has used real characters and realistic presentation of life. He was born in Peshawar and the formative years of his life were passed in Punjab so he portrays Punjabi characters and Punjabi life with great minuteness and realism. Anand's novels are convincing and credible accounts of the social manners, customs, ideas and beliefs, which are characteristics of life in Punjab. Many of his characters are modeled faithfully on people whom he had actually known and met. Thus, the character of Bakha in *Untouchable* and that of Munoo in *Coolie* are modeled on those of his boyhood playmate.

Anand's realism is also seen in his use of literal translation of Punjabi exclamations and swear-words. These expressions like "Rapemother", " Rape-sister", "Wha Guru", "Ri daughter of a Pig" are frequent in the novel. "Dogs" is the name that normally comes to the mind of the privileged folk to identify the outcaste. The "touching incident" reveals the horror of being an untouchable. The people who gather around Bakha shoot abuses by calling him, " low-caste vermin", "Swine", "Cock eyed son of a bow-legged Scorpion", "dog", "brute", "dirty dog", "Son of a bitch", "Son of a dog", "Offspring of a pig" etc. These abusive words thrown on a lonely and helpless person are in opposition to the privileged folk's claim of being "twice-born". These words actually reveal their polluted mind. Excessive use of such expressions has been criticised as course and vulgar, but Anand could not have presented Punjabi life so realistically without a liberal use of such expressions as characterise modes of speech in Punjab.

Untouchable has the immediacy of the true voice of feeling. It reflects fully the image of a decadent society, and conveys the sense of deeply felt life. Anand shows complete understanding of the human situation and a sensitive discrimination of moral values. He also writes with a transparency and power arising out of his intimate personal experience. His own childhood memories find dramatic rendition in the novel. Anand shares the intimate life with Bakha, modeled after one of the many sweepers he knew during those halcyon days. In effect, a great deal of personal urgency has gone into the making of character. The flesh of his flesh and blood of his blood, Bakha certainly acquires a flesh-and-blood reality.

Untouchable is basically an epic of misery of the individual caught in the net of the age old caste system but at the same time, the novel has a tragic beauty of its own. Bakha is simultaneously a rebel and a victim. His anguish becomes our anguish, his sorrows become our sorrows. But Bakha has no tragic status other than his status as a scapegoat and a victim, tyrannised by a recalcitrant society. He is the lowest of the lowly whose destiny does not suffer any appreciable erosion. For Bakha it is true what E.M. Foster put it in the preface; He has just the right mixture of insight and detachment, and the fact that he has come to fiction through philosophy has given him depth.

It might have given him vagueness-that curse of the generalizing mind-but his hero suffering abstraction. Bakha is real individual, lovable, thwarted, sometimes grand, sometimes weak, and thoroughly Indian. Anand creates a dense web of actualities, so that the created universe in the novel bears a direct resemblance to the actual one. Anand's realism is also seen in his portrayal of all aspects of life, even the ugly and the seamy ones. He does not eliminate the ugly aspects of human nature from his picture of life. Filth and dirt is as much a part of life as beauty, cleanliness and decency. It is not that he loves ugliness but realism demands it if it is that in actual life. It is disgusting, no doubt, but it is a part of life, and so Anand has not hesitated to introduce it in his novel.

Anand's realism is also seen in his theme. The theme of the novel is expressly authentic and eloquently public. The idea of untouchability as a social evil obsessed the minds of men in the 1930's. Gandhi called the untouchables *harijan* ("men of God") and fought almost single handed for the eradication of the evil of untouchability. He initiated revolutionary social action and won many rights for neglected strata of society. A novelist of social action and conscience, Anand deals with the problem in vivid artistic terms. His treatment of the theme in the novel implies moral seriousness of a high order. Anand has brought back the Indo-Anglian novel from history and romance to the hard realities of the present and made it from mere entertainment or escapist light reading into an instrument of social reform. Anand is a committed writer, a novelist with a purpose, his purpose being to focus attention on the suffering, misery and wretchedness of the poor which results either from the exploitation of the under-dogs of society by the capitalists.

Through his art he has rendered valuable service by highlighting the plight of the under-dog of society, by enlisting our sympathy for them, and thereby paving the way for social reform. Anand tells us in his 'Apology for Heroism'; The theme of my work is the whole man and the whole gamut of human relationships, rather than only one single part of it.

He adds:

> Just as I desire a total and true humane view of experience, a view of the whole man, in order that

> a completely new kind or revolutionary human may arise, so I have been inclined to stress the need for a truly humanist art commensurate with the need of our time.

Anand is a realistic novelist with difference. The out ward and material manifestation of life is not the whole truth of or him. He does not ignore completely the life of the spirit. His man is not dominated by the environment and chained to a material and physical universe. His realism embraces all aspects of life. E.M. Foster admires Anand in his preface to the novel recognises the wider gamut of emotions assimilated into the novel; He (Anand) has just the right the mixture of insight and detachment and the fact that the has come to fiction through philosophy has given him depth.

Anand is a social reformist. He has concern for untouchables so he avoids all sorts of overt propaganda and sees that the novel develops along with the character in action. His strict fidelity to the facts of life and a variety of the social mores makes the novel at once a significant social document as well as a symbolic projection of the whole saga of human suffering. Bakha is put to a complex congeries of social realities, and the three incidents in which he finds himself unwittingly implicated, are keyed up to bring out the poignancy in the life of his protagonist .

Certainly Anand's novel untouchable is a masterly work because it evinces a happy harmony between his social preoccupations and artistic gifts. As Prof. K.R.S. Iyengar sums up the novel: Untouchable strikes us as the picture of the place of a society, and the certain persons not easily to be forgotten; a picture that is also an indictment of the evils of a decadent and perverted orthodoxy. As a novelist addressing himself to the task of exposing certain evils, Anand has been as effective as Dickens himself.

Thus, Anand has exposed social evil in its myriad manifestations and has evocatively presented different layers of human experience in the fiction. He enables to view humanity at large in a proper perspective. His close association with the underdogs and his passionate recordation of their woes has given his novel a rare cogency and an intimate quality of felt life.

COOLIE

Anand's childhood friend – a sweeper boy named Bakha helped him to write *Untouchable,* his awareness of the suffering of his childhood playmate, Munoo, who as compelled to labour in a pickle factory and who accepted his lot with fatalism peculiar to the Indian peasantry, urged him to write *Coolie*. It is real and social realism is pillar of the novel.

Mulk Raj Anand uses literature as a means to modify society has led critics to dub him as a propagandist despite his repeated emphasis on the fact that India context demands art with purpose. Anand has a purpose to write novels. He writes:

> "I feel that, only in fiction which is the transformation, through the imagination, of the concrete life, in words, sounds and vibrations, one may probe into the many layers of human consciousness in its various phases."

Coolie is a powerful social tragedy due to the artistic treatment of cruel, inhuman social forges of poverty and exploitation. The premature death of the protagonist becomes all the more tragic because he is an innocent child. Anand presented Munoo with sociologist significance by making him represent various phases of proletarian existence in specific settings in the course of the narrative, thereby organizing the action in a structurally meaningful way. *Coolie* is the tragedy of Munoo, an orphan, who moves from place to place in search of livelihood, driven by hunger, till he finally meets with his doom.

The novel presents a chain of adventures in a picaresque manner. But orphan Munoo the hero is not rouge. He is only the victim of world's rogueries. His search for bread, in a world where poor man's flesh and blood is treated as cheaper than bread, makes him restless and it forces him to move from place to place and finally fall into the clutches of death. Munoo is made to pass through diverse situations- as a domestic servant in an urban middle-class family in Sham Nagar, as a worker in a small pickle factory and as a coolie fighting for work in the city market in Daulatpur, as laborer in a cotton mill in Bombay and as rickshaw coolie in Shimla. In the words of C.D. Narasimhaiah, "The situations Anand creates are convincing on the whole and reveal aspects of life hitherto generally kept out of fiction as though are tabooed from it."

The realistic picture of poor Indians where mass suffer from the exploitation is truly depicted by Mulk Raj Anand in *Coolie*. There are exclamations with which *Coolie* begins: Munoo ohe Munooa oh Mundu! With these Punjabi rustic words the novel begins and explores the social evils of child labour and suffering saga of Munoo. His father died when he was a mere child. He inherited poverty and squalor from his exploited father. When *Coolie* opens he is a poor orphan boy hardly fourteen years of age. He is a universal kind of figure. He is the passion not only of India but also of mankind. The novel opens with the shrill soprano of Munoo's aunt resounding through the valleys. He is continually beaten by his aunt, and his mind is haunted by the death of his parents. After much abuse and blows from his uncle Daya Ram and blisters on his feet from trekking barefoot for miles in the blazing sun to Sham Nagar, Munoo is installed as a servant in the house of Babu Nathooram on five rupees a month – in words of Bibi Uttam Kaur:

> More money, in fact, than your mother and father ever saw.

Munoo feels violently insulted, as he has relieved himself at their kitchen doorstep. His mistress berates him. Anand writes: Vay, you eater of your masters! Vay, you shameless brute! You pig! You dog! The storm burst on his head as, hearing no response to her call, she appeared at the door, saw him, and unable to bear the sight, withdrew. Vay, you shameless, shameless, vulgar, stupid hill boy! May the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence! May you die! What have you done! Why didn't you ask me where to go? May you fade away! May you burn! We didn't know we were taking on an animal in our employ, an utter brute, a savage! What will the Sahib think who pass by our doors every morning and afternoon! The Babuji has his prestige to keep up with the Sahibs. Hai! What a horrible, horrible mess he has made outside my door!

Anand has painted the true picture of Munoo with the real color of life. The harsh reality found in the novel. The very subject it self is real. The exploitation and suffering saga of the poor boy is an account of the society where we find this situation in our day to day life. Anand has made the pan picture of the reality in the novel. The use of real language and the translated words gives the effect of freshness and reality. The words used for Munoo by Bibi Uttam Kaur are quite real and very similar with the words used for Bakha in *Untouchable*. Like Bakha in *Untouchable*, Munoo is an untouchable in the house of Babu Nathoo Ram. Sheila, Nathoo Ram's daughter, pushes Munoo away when he prances on all fours like a monkey to entertain her. She tells him:

> You are a servant; you must not play with us.

The social realism is also seen in the poor condition of Indian labourers. It is real as the starvation was felt by Munoo is one of the ironical comment on the agriculture based nation – India. Munoo has been picked up by Seth Prabha Dayal who has come to own a pickle factory in

Daulatpur. Here Munoo is fed well on arrival, and Mulk Raj Anand ironically remarks:

> It was the most sumptuous meal he had eaten since the feast on the death anniversary of his father and mother, which his aunt had given three months before he left the hills.

Anand explores the miserable condition and relationship of master and servant like that which existed between Nathoo Ram and Munoo or between Mr. W.P. England and Nathoo Ram. He censures all relationships that are inhuman, unhealthy and meanly submissive. Philip Henderson observes:

Coolie takes us into a world in which the comradeship of man for man exists only among the very poorest people; with nothing to hope for their common humanity is all they Possess.

Munoo, in his marathon run in life is crushed every way under the heavy burden of colonised mind. The relationship between the colonialists and colonised is form of master-servant relationship and Munoo's suffering is mostly due to such established social order. That clearly appears when Daya Ram, Munoo's uncle, said to his master Babu Nathoo Mal:

> I bow my forehead to you, Babuji, he said, joining his hands and dusting his feet as he entered.
>
> He also ordered to Munoo; 'Join your hands to the Babuji, you rustic'.

This relationship is degrading for the servant as it makes the rulers proud and arrogant, and the ruled lose all sense of self-respect and degenerate into cringing sycophants. In the home of Babu Nathoo Ram, Munoo is treated most cruelly. Bibiji makes him over-work from morning till night, constantly lashes him with her tongue and he is beaten mercilessly for the least fault.Anand puts the following words into the mouth of Chota Babu, Dr. Premchand (the younger brother of Babu Natthu Ram) who has a sympathetic dealing with Munoo, the waif who becomes scapegoat after the China tray falls from his hold:

> How is he responsible for that monkey faced man's bad taste? asked Premchand, and how is he to blame for all this junk in your house which apparently annoyed Sahib ?" – 'come here, you fool', shouted the Doctor, laughing. 'The wound will become septic with those filthy ashes. Come and show in to me'. Munno submitted to the diagnosis. The doctor found that it was a dangerous out, reaching almost to the skull.

Sheila, the innocent girl child in *Coolie* is deliberately exploited by her mother (Bibiji) as Catherine Mansfield in her story *The Dolls' House* shows how the innocence of the children (belonging to upper class family) is butchered the moment they are plucked from mixing with the children of the lower class families. Anand writes vividly, Oh, go aways, cried Kausalya timidly, We don't want you to play with us, said Sheila. Mother said we are not to play with you. She really liked him and was amused by his funny dance.

She wanted him to play with her, but her mother's advice had sunk into her and set up a barrier. She liked to touch him. She came towards him and, catching him by the ear, dragged him about.

Anand is passionately concerned with the villages, with the ferocious poverty and the cruelties of caste, with orphans, untouchables, and urban labourers. He writes in an angry reformist way, like a less humorous Dickens and a more emotional Wells, of the personal sufferings induced by economics, even when he is writing of caste. In *Untouchable*, of the three solutions hinted at to the problem of the untouchable-Christ, Gandhi and Main Drainage-the machine- it is the last which is most favoured by Anand. William Walsh observers that, It is a quality working right through Coolie, where

Anand shows himself one of the first Indian writers to look on the savagely neglected, despised and maltreated power with an angry lack of resignation. The novel combines an acrid indignation at the condition of the poor together with a Dickensian vivacity in physical registration and a delicate sense of the psychology of Munoo, the walf-hero, in particular of the rhythms of his growth from boy to adolescent. Munno's victim role brings home to one the passive quality of the Asiatic poor in what Anand shows to be a markedly static and hierarchical society, just as the immense tracts, from Shimla to Bombay, covered in the boy's forced journeys convey in a way new in Indian fiction the continental vastness and variety of India. At last Munoo realises that the root cause of his tragedy is poverty as he feels:

> I am a Kshatriya and I am poor, and Verma, a Brahmin, is a servant boy, a menial, because he is poor. No, caste does not matter. The Babus are like the Sahiblogs, and all servants look alike: There must only be two kinds of people in the world; the rich and the poor.

In this connection, Saros Cowasjee writes:

What Munoo suffers at the hands of his master is no more than what he suffers at the hands of fellow workers as downtrodden as himself who are capable of cruelty and callousness born out of a savage struggle for survival. *Coolie* is an epic of misery giving us a heart-rending real account of the suffering and misery of the poor like Munoo. The poor are the victims of social, colonial, capitalistic, and communal exploitation and Anand's picture of the Indian poor and their suffering is both pathetic and realistic. Hoping against hope, Munoo seeks a safe shelter in life:

> If we go further, there might be a place for us somewhere, Munoo said, urged by the cool breese that came like a snake swishing from the darkness of the sea on his right. And he bravely led the way.

Coolie is hardly less poetic than *Untouchable*. A deep current of compassion and pathos runs through both these novels. Munoo's remarks on his own life are the clear instance of pathetic and compassionate statement:

> We belong to suffering! We belong to suffering!

Munoo pass through his journey of life, before his achieving destiny, which is merely survival. With regard to *Coolie*, M. K. Naik observes:

> The central theme of the novel is the tragic denial to a simple landless peasant of the fundamental right to happiness. The terrible destiny of being a victim of exploitation is indeed Munoo's dubious birthright.

Industrialism and capitalism are not the only forces that exploit Munoo. Communalism also lends its evil hand. The fires of communal hatred are further fanned by politicians. The social panorama against which Munoo moves, also gives the novelist an opportunity to deal with the issues such as relationship between the Indian and the British in pre-independence days. Misery and exploitation go hand in hand as do the moments of joy and happiness. Treatment given to Munoo by Seth Prabha Dayal and his high-souled wife, kind hearted friendship with Hari, kind treatment given to Munoo by Mrs. Mainwaring when he is ill are the moments of silver lining in the dark clouds of his life. The theme of the exploitation of the underprivileged is presented in great depth and the picture is drawn with vividness. With its scene shifting from the Kangra hills down to the plains of Bombay and back to the Punjab hills with its crowded canvas, the novel covers all the classes of society from the landless peasant to the aristocratic Anglo-Indian and British. This wide and varied spectacle of human suffering has almost an epic quality.

The picture of the dirt and squalor in which the factory workers live, is unsparing in its detail. Perhaps the 'finest touch is the scene where Munoo and Hari with his family are seeking a night's shelter on the crowded pavements of Bombay. The mystery is explained by a half-naked woman who sits mourning there and tells them:

> My husband died there last night. Hari responded typically of the situation. He has attained the release, he tells her, we will rest in her place. We are not afraid of ghosts.

'I see in these simple sentences', says C. D. Narasimhaiah, 'the wisdom of an old living culture which has sustained our peasantry through centuries of misery and manifesting itself now in an uprooted peasant in search of factory job. Death has ceased to frighten the poor, they are past all fright, it is life that is a threat, and death released as Hari put it. Anand's rustics, like those of Wordsworth and Hardy, reveal a solemn dignity born out of unending suffering. Their stoical acceptance of fate is not fatalism but wisdom acquired through long experience.

Anand describes the real situation in the novel. The scene dealing with Munoo's life in the industrial slums of Bombay offer a graphic account of the working of the capitalist system. The factory is an intolerable inferno with unbearable heat radiating from the tin sheets, the continuous wild hum of the machine, the monotony of the work, the threat of impending danger and above all the inhuman attitude of the employer. The coolies working under such conditions degenerate into moving corpses with fear fixed on their brows.

Munoo, Hari and other coolies continue to work in the factory suffering patiently all the exploitations and atrocities committed by their employers. But the crowded dwellings, dirty latrines, regular cuttings made from the low pay given to them on one pretext or anther and the dismissal of Ratan, who has been a member of the trade union, compel the Trade Union leaders to be active in the cause of labourers. Soon

Munoo hears the speeches made by the leaders of Red Flag Union.

Particularly Munoo is impressed by Suada's speech: There are only two kinds of people in the world; the rich and the poor, and between the two there is no connection. The rich and the powerful, the magnificent and the glorious, whose opulence is built on robbery and theft and open warfare, are honoured and admired by the whole world and by themselves. You, the meek and the gentle, wretches that you are, swindled out of your rights, and broken in body and soul, you are respected by no one, and you do not respect yourselves.

Sauda's speech reminds Munoo that long ago at Sham Nagar, he too has had similar thought about the rich and the poor. With the fiery speeches of the leaders of Red Flag Union, the situation turns dangerous for the factory owners. So they cleverly convert the labour meeting into a Hindu- Muslim communal riot. Munoo realises the danger and takes to his heels. As he runs up Malabar Hill to escape the hectic police action, he is knocked down by the motor car of an Anglo-Indian lady, Mrs. Mainwaring. The final act of Munoo's tragedy begins when she takes him to Simla, as she wants a servant. Here Munoo has: a deep-rooted feeling of inferiority to the superior people who lived in bungalows and wore Angrezi clothes.

She feels compassion for the wounded boy and takes him to Simla, where she wants to go. She, as narrated by Anand, is a woman of vast pretensions and no morals. In Simla, Munoo is employed as a servant in her house and he used to pull her in a rickshaw up and down the road. Munoo gradually grows weaker, catches T.B. and; in the early hours of one unreal, white night he passed away.

Such is the realistic story of Munoo, the coolie. Saros Cowasjee comments: The magic of the book is in Munoo's innocence, in his naïve warm heartedness, his love and comradeship, his irrepressible curiosity and sest for life. He belongs with some of the most enduring juvenile characters in modern literature: with Victor Hugo's Gavroche and Dicken's David Copperfield. And through him the whole misery of India speaks:

Iyengar compares Munoo with Bakha in connection of tragic end. He states:

> Munoo's robust health, his thirst for life, his essentially unspoilt nature, his readiness to respond to kindness, his puzzlement that good and evil should be so inextricably mixed up, all make him a true cousin-brother to Bakha, who are both heirs to the scalding frustration that is the only birthright for millions born under the Indian sun.

Coolie is an affirmation of life in its fullness expressed through the ses for life and human communion which characterises its child-protagonist Munoo who has: Essential loneliness of the soul, that apartness which he had succeeded in shattering by his sest and enthusiasm for work and entering the lives of others, by the natural love he felt others.

The tragic denial of life for Munoo is caused by his poverty, which is the sole cause of his tragedy. Death is in a way unreal for him, because he has experienced his essential oneness with the whole of the universe, and in death the tide of his life only reaches back to the "deeps" where the artificial compartments of this world vanish and all life is one. What Anand writes is true for both Munoo and Bakha:

> Man comes to this world naked and goes out of it naked, and he doesn't carry his goods away with him on his chest. It is best to travel light.

Munoo is born in the hills to die in the hills. Here Anand seeks to evoke pity towards the miserable plight of a subaltern in our society. Through him Anand has focused attention on the wretched plight of the millions of subalterns in India who are toiling, suffering, starving and dying of bitterness and despair-unable to carry on the burden of life-long sufferings. Through him Anand has aroused the conscience of humanity against the ruthless exploitation of the underdogs of our society.

Munoo, the protagonist of the novel, represents the proletariat the lives on the fringes of a society characterised by competition, not association. His realisation of the existence of the two warring classes, viz., the rich and poor, and the absence of nexus between the two, illustrates the crux of the Marxist thought. Friendless, alone, cut off from society, uprooted, from the wild-nature-escape of his homeland, and drifting like a straw on current in alien lands, he tries to salvage his past bit by bit as far back as he can remember. He has lost his name, his place, his friends, his people, his freedom and even his sense of time and comprehension of reality. He is not at ease; he feels restless, sick and finally silenced into oblivion- a poor subaltern as he is.

Social realism found in real life characters presented in Anand's novel. Lakshmi in *Coolie* is a typical Hindu wife devoted to her husband and children. Parbati has that "wisdom of the heart" which Anand considers more valuable than any amount of intelligence. Her love, sympathy, and kindness as well as her sufferings recall Munoo's dead mother. These women are different from Bibi Uttam Kaur, wife of Babu Nathoo Ram and Munoo's aunt.

Mrs. Mainwaring is Anglo-Indian character in Coolie. She is different from the masses and other characters as she is educated, elite, has romantic attitudes and their own philosophy of love. Mrs. Mainwaring feels:

> Why didn't the world understand how a woman gives herself in love, in hate, in pity, in tenderness, in playfulness and in a hundred different moods?

Social set up presented by the characters such as - Daya Ram, Babu Nathoo Ram, Prabha Dayal, Ganpat, Jaysingh, Ratan, Hari, Mr. W. P. England, Dr. Premchand and Jimmie Thomas in *Coolie*. In this connection Margaret Berry comments:

> The centre of consciousness in the novel, a pair of spectacles through which is surveyed the social life of India in all its misery and wretchedness. All other men and women, their morality and behaviour, their mode of thinking and speaking are evaluated in accordance with Munoo's reaction to them.

In *Coolie*, the characters serve to fill up the canvas and complete Anand's panorama of Indian social life-coolies in the grain market of Daulatpur, the sick and destitute pavement dwellers of Bombay, the workers in the cotton mill etc. Anand does not, of course, deal with the strong fundamental passions of his characters, nor does he dabble into the intellectual pursuits of men and women. He focuses only on the mundane affairs of his fictional men and women. As a principle of his social realism, he does not dwell on the extraordinary in emotion or intellect, and strictly adhere to the common social activities of his characters.

As writer of fiction, Anand's notable marks are vitality and a keen sense of actuality. Anand is a genuine for describing the inequities and peculiarities in the current human situation with candour as well as accuracy. Of Anand's early novels it can be said that they come fresh from contact with the flesh and blood of everyday existence. He has no laborious psychological or ideological preoccupations, and he is content to let his characters with a lively curiosity and also a deep compassion.

Some of his English characters, no doubt, are no more than caricatures but there are others whose words ring true and whose actions seem natural. The titles of his early novels- *Untouchable, Coolie, The Village*seem to emphasise the universal as against the particular; as if Bakha is all 'untouchables', Munoo is all 'coolies'; however, being a true artiest, Anand makes the individual-Bakha or Munoo- assert his uniqueness, without ceasing to be the universal. There is a 'case', an implied point of view; but the novel is more than the case, for it is humanity that finally triumphs. The language, with its load of swear-words and expressions literally translated from the vernacular idiom- 'rape sister', 'rape mother', 'rapers of your daughters', the illegally begotten, 'son of a witch', 'where have you died', 'devil without horns', eater of monsters' etc. often produces a crude or ludicrous effect. As a writer, Anand is often undistinguished, and seems to be too much in a hurry; but the vitality of his creations, the variegated richness of his total comprehension, and the purposive energy of his total comprehension, and the purposive energy of his narratives carry all before them.

The outstanding feature of *Untouchable* and *Coolie* is the narrative technique that introduced a significant change in the Indian fiction writing. The new development of Indian novel took place as result of the realistic assessment of the Indian society and its artistic portrayal of the struggling masses exploited by the upper class people. This development took place by the historical understanding of the social reality, and by its artistic expression in novels, and not by a formal antihistory modernistic creative vision, which has faith in the significance of the form of the novel.

Mulk Raj Anand deftly deals with social problems in his novels. It is desirable to give due consideration to the technical aspects of his writing. In his plot-construction, style, humor and pathos, his novels are not mere documentaries on social problems devoid of literary flair but also out standing techniques he has used. Anand has a vast range of themes and situation for his plot. The analysis of the conditions and sentiments of his characters makes the end of the novelists quite explicit. He is a novelist who believes in portraying realism.

Untouchable and *Coolie* are alike so far as their themes are concerned. The former portrays an untouchable in his true colours and the latter lays bare the life of a coolie, a victim of capitalistic economy. *Untouchable* attacks the social setup; *Coolie* concentrates on social evils which issue from an inequitable economic system which Anand has presented in realistic manner. In Anand's realistic treatment of themes, he may be compared with the masters of realism; Balzac and Zola, through his realistic portrayal of characters and true and bold depiction of the problems of Indian society. He has first hand experience of the lives of the poor and the lower class of society. He is truly the pioneer novelist due to his realism, humanism and social protest.

Coolie includes an immense variety of heterogeneous human material. The novel is real in its sweep, range and variety, a prose epic of modern India, an epic of misery. The framework of the novel is picaresque and episodic. In this connection, Iyengar states:

> Anand's capacity to evoke diver places, persons, moods, scenes, and situation is as uncanny as it is unlaborious, and few novels of modern India can excel its sheer amplitude and power of narration.

The closer study of *Untouchable* and *Coolie* reveals that Anand has imparted form and unity to his vast, complicated, and heterogeneous material in a number of ways. In this connection, C. D. Narasimhaiah comments:

> Contrasts, reinforcements, parallel situations seem to be an important part of Anand's technique in concretizing in words the patterns of life which he knows best.

Whatever be the ways of conveying his art, it is art with a purpose for Anand. His aim as social reformers is to address contemporary social problems to bring about a change in the tradition – bound society for the betterment of the poor masses. In *Coolie*, Mulk Raj Anand presents life in its various colors. He delineates the elements of anger, hate and laughter.

The novels establish him great humorists not only of his respective periods but also occupy a prominent position in Indian fiction. He has as serious a goal of writing as any modern humorist. Humor and satire are present in a very steady and static flow in the novels. Laughter arises at appropriate occasions and it gives rise to beauty and grace in proportional ways.

Anand is humorist in the true sense of the world, his humor being characterised by immense variety. There is humor of every shades and types in Coolie - farce, pure humor, satiric humor, irony, etc. you name the type of humor and Anand has it. But humor, which is more typical of Anand, arises from the observation of minute details in character and situation and exaggerating them. A notable example of satiric humor is found in Mr. England's visit to the house of Babu Nathoo Ram:

Mr. England's embarrassment multiplies as his hosts try to entertain him. Dr. Premchand seeks advice on 'courses of study' in England, which leads the cashier to reflect that though he had to pose as a big shot here, he had never been to a university and knew nothing about courses of study except those offered by short hand school in Southampton Row. Nathoo Ram plants a huge family photograph on Mr. England's knee and dust from the back of the fame soils the latter's trousers.

Munoo's monkey-dance is equally funny and equally satiric in its intent. To make his acting more realistic, he bites Sheila on the cheek. However, the result is disastrous; he is mercilessly beaten and is obliged to run out of Daulatpur in terror. Thus here is a skillful blend of humor and pathos.

Inseparable from the quality of humor is the quality of pathos. In fact, Mulk Raj Anand knows how to touch and melt. He is familiar with human suffering and so he succeeds in focusing real life of his characters. In *Coolie,* there is a pathetic account of the suffering and misery of Munoo in the different phases of his life. The moving account of Munoo reflects the way in which the poor Indian are exploited and illtreated. Consider this moving description:

> An emaciated man, the bones of whose skeleton were locked in a paralytic knot, dragged himself by the edge of the road, previously near the wheels of passing victories, begging with a wail, and half metallic from reception: O' man, give me a piece.

The narrative style which Anand has adopted is also very outstanding. In expressing the deep feelings of human heart, Anand's style assumes great lyrical power and beauty. He puts forth the realities of life in aphorisms. The foremost reason of the simplicity and naturalness of his prose style is that he never tries to make his simple things sound mysterious. In narration or in dialogue in English, has a distinctly 'Indian coloring'. He achieves this effect by iteration, the swiftness with which adjective is piled upon adjective and by the heightening of emotion as the total result of both. Words denoting respect such as Huzoor, Sarkar, Maharaj, Sahib, are used in a complimentary sense in a peculiarly Indian way. In M.K. Naik's words:

> Anand's strength lies in his closeness to mother earth. His style indicates this not less conclusively than his vision.

Mulk Raj Anand's socialist vision of life, his characters, narrative techniques, philosophy of life, and moral precepts make a set of remarkable social realism for both these novels. Mulk Raj Anand highlighted the various parasitic customs, which prevailed in the respective contemporary societies. No one can the fact that undisputed legislation is the last resort to bring about a change in the tradition bound Indian society. However, the great visionary was aware that legislations too make a limited impact until and unless the conscience of masses is aroused and people are willing to implement social reforms in day-to-day life. *Untouchable* and

Coolie, as epics of social realism, functioned as eye-openers and contributed greatly to draw our attention to the miseries of vast Indian masses. In this way, Anand has used his artistic talent to serve the cause of humanity. Anand touched the slumbering conscience of the contemporary masses by raising his voice against the prevailing evil traditions. He unfolded scenes of untouchability and poverty and its consequences in a number of his novels.

For Anand, man, the ordinary man is the central focus of his creative writings. The philosophy of humanism runs as a red thread throughout his novels. Compassion for the poor and underdog is a major strain in his treatment of his themes. This is his message of solace to the suffering humanity. In *Coolie*, Munoo's tragedy has a universal appeal. The essential dignity and innocence of human being is not the preserve of the rich and sophisticated upper classes. That the men from lower social classes and economic backgrounds equally deserving of these human attributes is brought out in *Coolie* by showing the daring of these suffering men to hope against hope.

The fiction of Anand is largely realistic. Social realism is a dominant strain of his novels. They express his philosophy of realism and naturalism. They also express his dreams. Thus three things – realism, naturalism and social realism get mingled in his fictions. The most important writer in the new wave of realism that swept over Indian literature in the nineteen twenties and nineteen thirties was Mulk Raj Anand. As befits the aspirations of a social realist, he chose the novel as his medium, and it was the novel which was to remain dominant form of literature for Indo-Anglian writers up to the present time.

Anand's early-and best- novels are deliberate attempts to expose the distress of the lower castes and classes of India. They are undisguised in their plea for social change, and are motivated by intense anger and pity. The configurations of the novels change, but the underlying pattern is uniform: the destruction of a human victim in India who, in spite of his good-will, his innocence and his aspirations to a better life, is brutally destroyed by the socio-economic system that is inhuman, whether in its traditional feudal form of a caste system or in its more recent manifestation as 'imperialistic capitalism'. Anand's novels are far from perfect as works of art, but their passionate realism is arresting in a powerful, if crude way, and they remain compulsive reading to this day.

Coolie is written in the vein of a realistic fiction. The solid facts of life have been recapitulated here. The illusion of reality or miserable life in *Coolie* is created by starkly realistic narration. It is well-known fact in India that an orphan is very often maltreated by his uncle and is thrown into the busy stream of life even as a child. This psychology is the first stroke of realism in the beginning of the novel. *Coolie* is the transcript of life; there are events which have accuracy and photographic realism. For instance, this piece of conversation between Munoo and Varma is naturalistic:

> "What do you flare up so now?" said Verma. "That shows she has given you her favors and endeared herself to you. I see ! what is she like under her dhoti? Like this? And he made a vulgar sign with his fingers."

Anand's observation is conscious and keen. He describes scenes with unflinching fidelity to the spirit of reality. The picture of dirt and squalor in which the factory workers live is done with unsparing detail and candor of a naturalist.

Mulk Raj Anand asserts that "Art is for life's sake". He is a realist whose social vision was shaped by time, place and the circumstances of the contemporary period. Anand is a writer with a mission to put an end to hypocrisy, cruelty, insensitivity, dichotomy and injustice prevailing in society. His writing is for the human beings. Anand once said:

> What is writer if he is not the fiery voice of the people, who, through his own torments, urges

> exaltations, by realizing the pains, frustrations, aspirations of others, and by cultivating his incipient powers of expression, transmutes in art all feeling, all thought, all experience – thus, becoming the sear of new vision in any given situation.

Anand has truly the fiery voice of the people belonging to the poor class and untouchables. He has successfully communicated the hopes, aspirations, pains and frustrations of this class of society. He wrote:

"of the people, for the people and as a man of the people".

Anand is social reformist and in his hands the fiction is a platform for social reform and awareness among the masses and his novels are powerful instruments to protest social reality. And no doubt this social worker enveloped in the grab of novelist participated in the struggle to be human. He believes that to live with others in communion and dissolve differences; to share and to love are the only residuals of a life time of relentless struggle-which he calls his humanism.

Anand is a socialistic writer and his *Coolie* is a novel of social protest. The sense of anger with which he portrays Munoo's suffering and exploitation is a direct expression of his love of man, a basic tenet of his humanism. Critical of various social ills and evils, his central focus is on the exploitation of the underdogs of society, poverty, greed, selfishness, hypocrisy, corruption, industrialism, capitalism, communalism, etc. Regarding Anand's vision of life as reflected in his fiction, P. K. Singh observes:

> Anand is very much a man of the world, living and loving in accordance to the rhythms of his own nature. He has never been above the battle; rather, he has fought bravely against wrongs and injustices. He has composed the theme song of love and has made his voice echo in clamorous notes to arouse the conscience of humanity.

In *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, Bakha and Munoo are epic heroes of suffering. The other characters in these novels face pathetic and miserable conditions because of their social background and economic dependence.

The female characters in both the novels make a highly piteous reading. The novels of Anand present a fictional world peopled by a striking variety of characters, covering a wide area of Indian social and political science. The social realism in *Coolie* is unified by the intensely human personality of the hero, who goes through this world like a shaft of love illuminating it and resolving the blind confusion of human relationships.

From the very beginning of the novel we see Munoo trying to forge links with the world much in the same way as Bakha in *Untouchable*. Munoo easily transcends caste considerations and thinks of only the two essential classes of mankind, "the haves and the have-nots". These words are not merely polemical: Munoo has realised their truth through suffering till the end of his life. Anand concludes the novel on a sad note:

> But in the early hours of one unreal white night
> he passed away – the tide of his life having reached
> back to the deeps.

There are critics who say that Anand's realism is untrue because he sees his characters not as they are but as they should be. This is called socialist realism and is different from social realism. Social realism depicts society as it is.

There is complete correspondence between the reality depicted in a novel and the existing social reality. As against this, socialist realism is the depiction of idealised society. Anand is both a realist and an idealist. This may look a paradox but social realism is supplemented by socialist realism because a merely factual depiction of social reality does not serve any purpose. It should carry an idea of the future society shorn of the present evils.

In Coolie, we get an idea of Anand's socialist realism. Anand expresses humanism as the basis of existence on the earth. His realistic approach is colored by his sympathy. The speeches of Sauda give an idea of how coolie should live. By the affectionate treatment of Munoo in some places like that of Simla, and Daulatpur the novelist dreams of more persons like Ratan and Prabha.

At the same time, it should be made clear that Anand is nowhere, not even in Coolie, a Marxist whose main aim socialist realism as is the case with some Russian novelist. What is remarkable about Anand's realism is that it is not an artistic creed but a way of life.

In short, Mulk Raj Anand presents a real picture of Indian life in *Coolie*. There is sincerity and immediacy in his realistic approach to his problems. If the themes here betray a sense of protest, it is a part of realism because realism is by no means a transcript of life only. Anand's social realism is sustained by his faith that an artist can contribute immensely towards social change.

He is committed writer and his commitment, infact, was to liberate mankind and redeem the world from misery and pain by revealing the true nature of man with his inherent weaknesses.

His purpose behind choosing underdogs as his protagonists was to awaken the conscience of the readers would over to work for the eradication of social injustice and exploitation from the society.

His artistic vision includes all: Indian culture, customs, rituals, ethics and myths. His linguistic experimentations are undeniably carried out for the purpose of art as well as for the expression of fictional reality.

With the fictional reality and sympathy with Bakha and Munoo are the sympathy of that writer who recognised and lived life of suffering in its various aspects, but who, despite this, did not flee from it; that, much against his will, had to die; but death too could not make him relinquish his faith in life, in a true human life. What Sudarshan, the modern poet, says applies to both Bakha and Munoo:

> The world was listening your saga of suffering with rapt attention. And you went to sleep while telling your story!

6

Anand's Literary Creed

The gift of Mulk Raj Anand's imagination is shown again and again when he writes of crushed humanity. He breathes a sympathy which brings a new tenderness into contemporary writing. –*Montagu Slater*

A versatile genius, an optimist, a humanist, a profound thinker, a moving speaker, an able organiser, a politician, a civil servant, a journalist, a great scholar, a patient teacher, a capital storyteller, and a literary architect–all in a unique medley in one is Dr. Mulk Raj Anand. And, as a belletrist, he is a host in himself. Early in life, his intimate contact with the suffering underprivileged and the myriad levels of Indian masses with their differences of caste, creed, and colour seem to have implanted in his mind profound impressions about 'the still sad music of humanity.' The premature death of his nine-year-old, beautiful girl cousin, Kausalya, appears to have vibrated his inner strings, as Keat's brother's demise did the poet's, to brood over the mystery of life and death. Prompted by Irene, the charming daughter of a Welsh Professor of science with whom he fell in love at first sight, Anand became a writer. His research in philosophy has immensely contributed to his humanism; and as he admits in his *Apology for Heroism,* his research was, indeed, 'search for truth'. He felt that philosophy, should answer the problems posed by human needs.

He has fused, in the crucible of his imagination, the philosophies and the ideals of life of the Orient and the

Occident and given his golden message to the world through his works. His ideal is happiness–happiness of mankind in peaceful and harmonious co-existence. He preaches as Sorokin adovcates in his *Reconstruction of Humanity* that man should acquire spiritual awareness and altruism for the welfare of humanity, and should cease his onslaught of humanity. To expound this philosophy, Anand has aptly opted for fiction as his mouthpiece.

In his novels, it is mainly man's cruelty to man that he describes and vehemently condemns with a Dickensian piquancy' and candour and effectively evokes our sympathy and compassion. Thus, the problem he tries to face as a writer, as he admits in his *Apology for Heroism*, is not strictly 'a private, but a private-public problem', with Buddhist compassion. With this philanthropic outlook, he defines the general in terms of the particular with a universal appeal.

Untouchable is Anand's first noteworthy achievement. The theme of man's inhumanity to man is the mainstream of thought in the novel, depicted in the form of caste-hatred or untouchability. It is a chronicle of a day's incidents in the life of Bakha, an eighteen-year-old outcaste boy. He experiences the indictment of caste-hatred on him a number of times during a single day: he is abused and slapped for polluting a merchant; he is put to shame when he runs to save his sister, Sohini, while Kalinath, the priest, tries to rape her; he receives a shower of abuses for polluting an injured child in his attempt to help the child; lastly, his father, Lakha, the Head of the sweepers, drives him out of the house for having wasted his time in playing hockey.

He walks out frustrated and helpless. Gandhi with his dislike for untouchability, Colonel Hutchinson, the Salvationist, with his shield of casteless society and salvation for all, and Iqbal Nath with his new machine (the flush) raise towering hopes in him. He returns home and to his idle bed. Here Anand shows the impact of man's evil on man to a limited extent. His art of representing the general in the particular begins here. Bakha, here, is any untouchable; his tale is any untouchable's. All through the novel, Anand points out the inevitable play of fate, or *karma*, which is a regular feature of his novels.

Anand's next novel *Coolie* is the best and the most ambitious of his works inasmuch as *Of Human Bondage* is Maugham's transcending the limits of time and space. It describes man's evil to man with all its poignancy in terms of the fate meted out to the hero. In all aspects it is perfect, unique, and of chiselled excellence–art and plot, events and episodes, characterisation and narration, symbolism and didacticism. Here our interest hovers around the heights and hollows in the life of the protagonist, Munoo, a poor orphan hill-boy, verdant and innocent. Fate in diverse forms overpowers him everywhere, wherever he goes. The first chapter is a brief account of his life at his native village, Bilaspur.

His aunt under-feeds and ill-treats him with her frequent maledictions. She wants him to earn, and his uncle Daya Ram–who is indeed devoid of *daya*–takes him to the town to serve in the house of the Bank sub-accountant Nathoo Ram. In the second chapter, we see Munoo as a boy-servant at Sham Nagar in the house of Nathoo Ram, where he slogs and slogs without rest, from dawn to dusk, sweating in his dirty dublet.

To him, his mistress is no less a terror than his aunt, Gujri. Amidst the constant upbraiding of his mistress, Daya Ram's blows, the teasing of the other boy-servants of the houses hard by, and Nathoo Ram's nonchalance, the only consolation to him is Prem (Nathoo Ram's brother) who alone is kind to him. One day, the boy is kicked by his master with his boot for a peccadillo while playing with his master's daughter. A wild bird cannot be caged easily: Munoo escapes. Decried by the kindhearted Prabha under the bunk in the train, he is taken to Daulatpur. The third chapter is a vivid picture of his life in the Cat Killers' Lane at Daulatpur. He works in Prabha's pickle factory, where life is happy for him but for the occasional authority and abuses of Ganpat, Prabha's partner. Malevolent and demonish, Ganpat adulates Prabha finally. Arrested for debts and beaten by the police, Prabha leaves Daulatpur in adversity with the result that Munoo is left unshielded and helpless.

In vain he becomes a coolie. Paralysed by the competition and the cunningness among the coolies, he strives for security; and with the help of an elephant driver of a circus company he stows away to Bombay. In the fourth chapter, Anand gives a clear picture of Munoo's life in Bombay, until Munoo gets proof of the elephant-driver's averment: 'The bigger a city is, the more cruel it is to the sons of Adam.' In Bombay he becomes a worker in the Sir George White Cotton Mills; he is one of the many workers exploited by Jimmie Thomas, the foreman. Within and without the factory, life becomes miserable. He lives with Hari, a worker and a fellow-sufferer, in the slums. Wage-cut and hunger, exploitation and the retrenchment of another worker Ratan, lead to labour turmoil and communal riots. In panic, the boy steals out of the pandemonium to Malabar Hills, where he is dashed down to unconsciousness by Mrs. Mainwaring's Chevrolet. She takes the boy to Simla. The last chapter is a picturesque description of Munoo's life under the kindly cruel treatment of his mistress.

With his double duty as her page and rickshaw-puller, over-work and undernourishment gradually fret away his health until at length he is abed with consumption. He excuses one and all–even his mistress–and attains spiritual sanctity. Death relieves him, relieves from the prison of life. Here Anand's representation of the myriad in the chosen is at its acme. It is a cosmic painting of the lives of thousands of orphans, coolies, boy-servants, factory-workers, and rickshaw-pullers, their health running down 'through the hour-glass of Time'. The novel is a treatise on social evil at its sundry levels and phases. Every one of Anand's other novels is but a kaleidoscopic turn of one phase or other: an event or a chapter, a character or a situation, in isolation, or in juxtaposition, appears shown under a magnifying lens. In other words, it is the microcosm to the macrocosm of Anand's world of fiction.

Two Leaves and a Bud is the sad tale of Gangu, a worker in the Macpherson Tea Estate, in Assam. Hari and Lakshmi (of *Coolie*) appear as Gangu and Sajani here; Jimmie Thomas, the foreman of the Cotton Mills at Bombay, is Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager. The evil atmosphere of the Sir George White Cotton Mills an arena of conflict and exploitation, treason and injustice, derision and devilry is shown in larger dimensions and with greater intensity in the Tea Estate in this novel. The European bosses pester and exploit the labourers. Gangu and his family suffer much: his wife becomes a prey to malaria; and he himself faces death at the point of Reggie's gun in his attempt to save his daughter, Leila, from the clutches of the lust-blind Reggie. As in *Coolie,* to quote Goronway Rees, here also, 'with great skill and without insistence, Dr. Anand shows the Indian coolies, exploited, starving, cheated, dirty, diseased, as the true heirs of one of the world's greatest civilisations'.

Next, Anand turns to his 'familiar earth of Punjab village, Nandapur, and tries to build up an ambitious epical structure' a trilogy: *The Village, Across the Black Waters,* and *The Sword and the Sickle,* These three novels give a picture of the life of a Sikh peasant, Lalu Singh, covering his boyhood, youth, and early manhood. Munoo in Bilaspur is Lalu of *The Village.* He is constituted counter to the tradition and sentiment of the village.

With the enthusiasm of Munoo who goes to the town own with his uncle, Lalu goes to see a fair at the neighbouring town. And without a second thought, he gets his hair shorn away just as Munoo empties his pressing bowels beside the kitchen-wall of Nathoo Ram's house. The insult caused at home-the abuses and the beatings and the attempt for a shameful donkey-ride spur him to revolt against the age-old custom and superstition. He leaves the house and joins the army just as Munoo leaves Bilaspur for the riddance of his aunt's maledictions.

The second of the trilogy, *Across the Black Waters,* is a picture of Lalu's experiences during the First World War. He is one of those ready for any havoc, ready to fall or fell. The conflict, the fire and fury of action, the frenzy of bullets (the love-messengers between nation and nation as Ruskin ironically puts it)–all place him in a world of embarrassment and dismay no less than the communal disturbances do Munoo at Bombay. After the car-accident, when Munoo opens his eyes from unconsciousness, he finds himself moving in Mrs. Mainwaring's car; when Lalu regains his consciousness, after his fall in the battle, he finds himself moving–only being dragged by a lion-mustached German.

And Lalu's life as a captive is no better than Munoo's in the service of the Anglo-Indian lady. After the war, Lalu gets release from the Germans. The third novel, *The Sword and the Sickle* is a catalogue of Lalu's activities in India until his incarceration in an Indian gaol. He awaits the fatal day behind the grating, pondering over the fruitless revolution in which he has partaken, as Munoo lies moribund reviewing the past in his mind. But, Lalu does not seem to have attained the spiritual elevation of Munoo at last; his life's journey remains incomplete; and had Anand extended this novel, or written another making it a grand tetralogy of Lalu, it would have been a splendid achievement with man's spiritual elevation as its central theme. In this trilogy, Evil shows his vagaries in the guises of religious superstition, war, and revolt. Lalu's role symbolises the lives of all detested, disgraced, dejected and duped, youth.

It is the atmosphere of the pickle factory at Daulatpur and the Cotton Mills at Bombay that prevails in Anand's *The Big Heart*. The novel shows the evil of tug between the capitalists, Lalla Murli Dhar and Seth Gokal Chand who open a factory, and the dispossessed thathiars, the hereditary coppersmiths. Ananta, the man with a big heart, wedges himself into this industrial dispute and endeavours to bridge harmoniously the abyss of rivalry.

But, he meets his tragic death thrown against a broken machine by Ralia, the Samson of the place while the latter is breaking the machine of the factory in sheer bedlam of fury and revolt. "I want to live," murmurs Munoo at Bombay in the Cotton Mills, "I want to know to work this machine, I shall grow and be a man." And it appears as though Munoo grew up in Anand's mind and reappeared in *The Big Heart* as Ananta with his limitless love for the machine and sympathy for the dispossessed thathiars. The tint of ruthlessness adumbrated in Ratan (in *Coolie*) reaches its climax in Ralia as seen in the final catastrophe. Ananta, with the tragic death meted out to him, is a symbolic and microcosmic representation of all Mahatmas and Kennedys; and the role of Ralia is a cosmic painting of all the starving stomachs of modern times.

It is fortunate that at least the first of the seven parts of Anand's personal odyssey *(Seven Ages of Man)* is published under the appellation *Seven Summers* which appears to have its foundation in embryo in the first chapter of *Coolie*. There is a brief account of Munoo recollecting his early childhood in the first chapter. Here, Anand describes in first person his own childhood experiences with great psychological insight. In general, it is 'the story of Indian childhood' amid all the incongruities and inherent evils of Indian social set-up described in true colours. No wonder if one finds something of one's childhood in the book. The part of Ratan and Piari Jan and the episode of Guy and Mrs. Mainwaring, man in the hands of woman, provide for the central theme of *The Private Life of an Indian Prince.* Here the hero is a wealthy and powerful Indian Prince, Victor, who lords over many, but is a sad lord over himself.

The sex-thirsty Prince becomes a puppet in the folds of a harlot, Ganga Dasi, like Guy in Mrs. Mainwaring's. She plays havoc with his feelings and the Prince, therefore, suffers so much like Guy or Munoo. He loses his power and wealth with the accession of Estates to the Indian Union. His cup of worries becomes full when he has been suspected in the murder of Bhool Chand, his rival Ganga Dasi's love. Most opportunely he becomes moon-struck. And his Rani Indira, the embodiment of true love, chooses to attend on him with all the delight of a devout wife.

Victor comes a lunatic, just as Munoo falls sick, and dies, because a woman. Ganga Dasi and Mrs. Mainwaring are two prints of the same stamp. They become bitches to all that prowl around them. But, while Mrs. Mainwaring's sex-thirst is due to sheer fancy, Ganga Dasi, as a prostitute, accmulates money. If Mohan, another rickshaw-puller, at Simla is kind and consoling to Munoo, Dr. Sankar becomes the 'Sancho Panza to the Prince's Don Quixote.' While Rani Indira is a token of all women of true love, Prince Victor is a realistic portrait of all the rich people with lust for power, wealth, and sex.

The Old Woman and the Cow takes us once more to a village, like Nandpur, with its stern classical order obstructing the current changes. The conflict between adherence to superstition and violating it for new values of life forms the fabric of this novel. As Jack Lindsey observes: 'here the key-pattern lies in the tale of *Ramayana* of a wife who is banished because she had innocently lived in another man's house.' Panchi and Gauri, the young married couple, claim our sympathies as they strive to find happiness and peace in love. Whereas Panchi fails to defy the meaningless ancient system, Gauri, with a stronger will, faces the banishment and rejects the narrow world of sentiment and superstition that enthralled her husband. She leaves the village like Munoo. The frustration of Munoo caused by the evil of social inhumanity finds expression in Panchi though in a different atmosphere and emphasis. Panchi stands for those diffident to defy the age-old senseless tradition; Gauri is a symbol of the courageous modern woman.

In *The Road*, Anand revives the problem of untouchability of his *Untouchable* sublimated to its dramatic essentials in the mould of the Prabha-Ganpat-like episode in *Coolie*. For improving the economic condition of the village by carrying its milk to the nearby town for sale, the outcastes hew stones to lay a road to the town. But the upper classes refuse even to touch the stones touched by the untouchables. Hence the latter undertake the work themselves. Infuriated by their unity and success, the upper classes set fire to their houses and force them to leave the village. We reach the climax when the outcaste Bhikhu encounters vis-a-vis the landlord's son, once his playmate. Although his lip is cut and is bleeding he controls his fury and withdraws like Munoo when kicked by his master at Sham Nagar.

He walks on the road, he has helped to construct, in the direction of Gurgaon to Delhi, where nobody would care to know his caste and pester him. Here Anand has intellectually exploited the image of the 'road': as a token of the rich man's dominance and luxury, as an emblem of the poor man's strife for betterment and as a symbol of outlet to 'a new world of greater freedom and hope.'

The evil of communal fanaticism leading to riots adumbrated in *Coolie* (chapter IV) appears to have been adopted and expanded in Anand's recent novel, *Death of a Hero*. Here Anand shows the cruelty of the Pakistani hordes as the sole cause for the tragic as well as heroic death of a dauntless Kashmiri nationalist hero, who dies for the cause of secular India. His tragic death is an indirect plea for international peace and harmony. This novel is Anand's condemnation of communal fanaticism inasmuch as, *The Home and the World* is Tagore's condemnation of political fanaticism.

In all these novels thus Anand exposes the bitter suffering or cruelty of humanity at different levels; superlatively loathes and condemns evil of all its shapes and shades; and greatly succeeds in tuning our hearts to compassion and beauty. The indomitable spirit, the spiritual upsurge of man is the real hero and the plea for universal love is the real theme of his novels. Through the roles of Bhikhu and Gauri, he preaches that man should defy and transgress whatever stands detrimental to new *values* and human glory. In his *Apology for Heroism,* he advocates that one should break through 'the facade of protective egoism around oneself,' believe in 'the creative life, which means the discovery, at the deepest levels, of Truth', and adopt 'worship of humanity.' This, in fact, is the keynote of his art. No wonder if E. M. Forster observes: He (Anand) had the right mixture of insight and detachment and the fact that he has come to fiction through philosophy has given him depth.'

No Indian writer, writing in English or in anyone of India's several languages, has had more to say on literary theory than Anand himself.' Margaret Berry in her study, *Mulk Raj Anand: The Man and the Novelist* (1971), devotes a long chapter to analyzing Anand's faith as a writer, discussing the three stages through which his concept of art passes: from a relatively unimportant idealism to Revolutionary Socialism and finally into what Anand calls "comprehensive historical humanism."

There was certainly a shift in Anand's literary perspective after he came under the influence of Marx in 1932. However, since his first four books were non-fiction, the criteria he applied to criticism and art cannot be strictly applied to his novels, anyway. I personally see no significant change in Anand's theory or attitude to the novel from the time he first began writing fiction, and the fine distinction that Margaret Berry draws between the second and the third stage is basically of little help since she herself admits contradictions between what Anand professes and what he achieves. Also, her discussion of Anand's concept of the novel becomes irrelevant when she throws it overboard and offers to judge his works in the light of her own "original" definition: A good novel presents interesting and believable human beings in reaction with their environment so as to suggest richly and intensively the universal experience of man. One would have thought that by now everyone has had enough definitions of the novel, Anand himself having added several. But I guess it is both Anand's and Berry's genius to turn up old earth and look at it as fresh soil. And not only that: Berry's phrase "the universal experience of man" shares much of the fuzziness of mind we have lately come to associate with Anand.

Literary theories expounded by writers tend to become perniciously dull when divorced from concrete examples, and the soaring idealism contrasts painfully with what has been achieved in practice. It is, however, quite a different matter when the writer makes value judgments in letters or diaries while actively involved in the process of writing, such as those made by Gustave Flaubert to Ivan Turgenev and George Sand, Feodor Dostoevsky to Nikolay Strachov, Stendhal to Balzac or Henry James to H.G. Wells. Much of what Anand has to say on the novel was written in the sixties, a decade which did not prove altogether fruitful for him as far as the writing of fiction was concerned, and one in which his work seems to fall far short of the high concept he wishes to advocate. Writing recently of the real test of a writer, he says that it, may lie in the transformation of words into prophesy. Because, what is a writer if he is not the fiery voice of the people, who, through his own torments, urges and exaltations, by realizing the pains, frustrations and aspirations of others, and by cultivating his incipient powers of expression, transmutes in art all feeling, all thought, all experience thus becoming the seer of a new vision in any given situation.

For all its admirable thought (which requires less imagination than one good line of prose or poetry), the definition is a cliche worked to death since Shelley called the poet the unacknowledged legislator of the world. How many writers, dead or alive, have stood up to the test? And how much effort does it require to demand these high standards from others? Or even from one's own self if one is not going to meet them?

But I am not being fair to Anand. I have ransacked his writings to pick out a passage which offends for obvious reasons. I could as easily have quoted to Anand's benefit from his letter dated 22 November 1967, written to me while he was working on *Morning Face:*

> The novelist should try to become the great god, Brahma, who created mankind but is not responsible for it; that is to say does not determine their destiny.... Distance is very important in art, because art, though like life and reflecting it, is not life.

Here there is a clear echo, perhaps unconscious, of Flaubert's contention that the artist must be in his work as God in his creation, invisible yet powerful. Though there is little common between Flaubert and Anand, both novelists in their best writings approximate to the goals they set before themselves. Flaubert more than Anand, for he is first and foremost an artist so objective is he that it is difficult to say from his novels what he must have thought in private life, while Anand's stories tell us as much about himself as about those of whom he writes. And though he is in his own way a stylist, there is in his writing no conscious attempt at perfection of style, or involvement with the fine details of technique and form which so obsessed Flaubert.

Anand's theories, though unoriginal, have definite place in the study of his novels. They arise from his concept of literature, which is to reveal life in all its contrarieties and in the process to create awareness in the reader. Conditioned by Marxist dialectics, the social impulse is, as with the writers of the thirties, at the heart of his writing. A work of art, be it a novel or a painting or a play, is first of all a social event. This explains why he gives maximum emphasis to the duties of a novelist (and what a good novel should be), and very little to the tools at his disposal. In his dosen or so articles concerned with the novel, he has to my knowledge only once commented on the need for a style:

> Of course, it is not enough to want to say something. Everything depends on how one says, how the imagination of a writer can transform the various realities, interpenetrate characters with insight, and "connect" the poetry and the prose. And, certainly, there has to be some kind of style.

This is a half-hearted acceptance of the importance of style, almost a concession since there seems to be no way out of it. On the question of form, he is even less accommodating. Reviewing Henry Green's *Loving in Life and Letters To-day,* he says: "And, if I may venture an arbitrary dictum, I should say that the primary condition of art is not form but sensibility." He insists, and not without reason, that anything could make a novel provided the writer can carry it off and communicate it with some effect. The novel form is loose enough to include both scandal like *Anna Karenina* and history of the Napoleonic period like *War and Peace,* so long as the novelist talks in terms of human beings and not puppets. However, Anand seems to leave the impression that neither style nor form is basically fundamental to the novel. "What is the use," he wrote to me angrily, "of keeping the form, the kerb and the edge all right and destroy the bloody horse, Roy Campbell's phrase, not mine." This outburst is not without its irony, for his novels are not formless, nor is he a writer without style.

By far the most lucid and balanced discussion on the functions of a novelist is to be found in his long confessional essay, *Apology for Heroism.* Very much a writer of the thirties himself, he judges the period to be aesthetically a failure: one in which there was little heroism but many heroic gestures. In a characteristic passage he tells us what he firmly disapproves:

> There were the simpletons who believed that an art form like the novel, for instance, was nothing else but reportage about social conditions. There were the subjectivists on the other hand who believed that it was enough skilfully to describe the phantasmagoria of one's psychological states, particularly the subconscious, dream, or clinical experiences.

And, of course, there were always the vast bulk of those others, the low pressure artist, the whores of literature, who wrote to provide escape and relaxation to the tired ladies and gentlemen of our suburban civilisation. And they all bandied words with each other.

That Anand disapproves of propaganda is no proof that his writings are free of propaganda or diatribe against those whom he mistrusts. But he is no propagandist: he is what George Orwell was, an expository, a political novelist, one who sees his characters and their actions in relation to the social, economic and political upheavals of his time. The distinction between political literature and propaganda "is extremely complex and involves the writer's ability to distinguish between his social conscience and his obligation to his art." Also, the line of demarcation is so fine that it very often is a matter of how one chooses to interpret it. Like

Thomas Mann, Anand believes that politics is everybody's business and that the modern writer with a conscience cannot shut himself up in an ivory tower. Discussing his obligation to his fellow men, he quotes Marx: "Philosophers have so far interpreted the world, the thing is to change it," and then goes on to ask: "But where was one to begin?"

He began by recalling the lives of the people he had known, and in his narratives introduced a whole new people who had seldom entered the realms of literature. The task wasn't easy, and with remarkable candour and humility he confesses:

> I could not, of course, sense the suffering of the poor directly because I had always been comparatively better off. No, mine was a secondary humiliation, the humiliation of seeing other people suffer. I do not know to what extent envy of the rich on my part was disguising itself as a hunger for social justice. Perhaps there was an element of this. Also the inadequacies of our life in India may have contributed something to my preoccupation. But I do not apologise for this because it is not easy in the face of such wretchedness and misery as I had seen in India to believe that material happiness and well-being had no connection with real happiness and the desire for beauty. So I sought to recreate my life through my memories of India in which I grew up, with a view to rediscovering the vanities, the vapidities, the conceits and the perplexities with which I had grown up, indifferent to the lives of the people around me. I felt guilty, for needless suffering was no matter for complacent pride or gratitude.

The fact that most of Anand's novels are concerned with people not of his own caste or class is important, for it provides the necessary detachment. It may be purely coincidental, but in his first nine novels (the only ones to have been first published in England), one notices a gradual progression in the caste and social standing of his hero. His first novel deals with a sweeper, the second with a coolie, the third with an uprooted field labourer, the next three with a sturdy peasant lad, followed by one about a machine-hand, then an autobiographical novel about his childhood, and finally a novel with a prince as its central character. Princes or paupers, all his heroes are victims: some of society's making, others of their own. And he has for them all what Arnold Bennett took to be the most essential gift in a novelist "a Christ-like, all-embracing compassion."

7

Thematic Beauty in Mulk Raj Anand

Though the Indian constitution has made it a crime to practise untouchability, there are still 60 million people in India who are discriminated against" (Saroj Cowasjee), and this gives Mulk Raj Anand his contemporaneity, and makes his fiction extremely relevant today, as the reflection of caste system largely constitutes his realism from which emanates his protest, commitment and ideology.

The major theme of Mulk Raj Anand's fiction is clash between the establishment and the outcaste. A down-to-earth fiction writer, Anand's experience is deeply rooted in the social conditions of his time. Indian society is his prime concern, and his characters, with all their authenticity, represent the most fundamental pattern of Indian society. He presents a society charged with the evils of untouchability, communal disharmony, caste compartmentalisations, and appalling economic differences. Having progressive leanings, Anand is a committed writer, his sympathies lying with the untouchables, the outcaste and the starving multitude.

Not withstanding his commitment and propaganda, he remains the greatest realist in Indo-Anglian literature. This realism spares him any wrong bias, and enables him tio take a balanced view of man and society and thereby makes him a great artist. He says, "My knowledge of Indian life at various levels had always convinced me that I should do a Comedie

Humaine. In this, the poor, the lowly and the untouchables were only one type of outcastes. The middle sections, the nabobs, and the rajas were also to be included as species of untouchables. Unfortunately, there has not been time to show the poor-rich of our country, who deserved pity more than contempt". Therefore, his propaganda is not for any particular social group or sect, but for "Man" himself, and in his novels, he has demonstrated how the social evils crush the potentialities of a man. Though "Man" is concern, he has seen man against the background of a society where conventions, corruptions and taboos cripple him. Of all the ills, the caste system as it is found in the Hindu society today is the crux of the problem Anand has taken as the background of his novels.

Dr. K.R. Srinivasa lyengar refers in his Indian Writing in English to a discussion some years ago with D.J. Enright and Nissim Esekiel, in which Sudhin Ghosh remarked that 'most of the Indian writers writing in English are in revolt against traditional Hinduism... they believe that they have got a mission that a novel's function should be seen through society...... They are more or less writing a social criticism of Hindu society'. Sudhin Ghosh obviously was commenting on the insularity and limitations of Indian fiction in English but he had undoubtedly Mulk Raj Anand, more than he had undoubtedly anybody else in his mind, while drawing such conclusions. However, indirectly Sudhin Ghosh gave Mulk Raj the honour of being the most representative writer of fiction in the Indo-Anglian field.

And that he really is. Anand voices the most fundamental sentiments of a man whose life is a strange amalgam of helplessness, anger, protest, despair and anxiety. The typical Indian lives life on many layers each of which is inextricably linked up with the other. The caste system is one such layer and it is a very vital thing for him. He cannot help it, so ingrained it is in him, and yet he is a victim of it. Mulk Raj Anand's realism lies in the depiction of a society in which the caste factor operates so easily and naturally, conditions everything so effortlessly, that often it ceases to be an issue even; it simply remains as backwater. But if a writer ignores this backwater he misses the very essentials of the society.

In Untouchable, caste is the theme whereas Coolie is about the new caste system, the economic 'classes' being so rigid as to be almost 'closed'. In Two Leaves and a Bud, the story is about the poor Indians suffering untold misery and ignominy in the hands of the British, but the Indian life that it presents is subdivided and fragmented on account of caste and community divisions; the obvious suggestion is the torture of the British in direct proportion with the disharmony amongst themselves.

The Big Heart is about the evil rivalry between business communities in an Indian town. These four novels were written in that phase of the writer's career when casteism was in its worst form in India and Anand was young enough to react against it and to register his voice of protest. About these novels of Anand, Iyenger says that they came 'fresh from contact with the flesh and blood of everyday existence'.

A class, on the other hand, is a social group of those people whose social status, largely decided by economic status, is more or less the same. The Englishman in Coolie represents a class but he is as fixed or closed as a caste determined by birth. The privileged merchant class is also a closed society, almost as rigid as a caste. In Untouchable, it is determined by birth; in Coolie economic group, which have become so rigid that a man of one group can hardly think of joining another, determines it. So, as far as the theme is concerned, basically Coolie of Anand is extension of Untouchable and there is much similarity between Bakha of Untouchable and Munoo of Coolie. In Untouchable, Anand culminates social evil that has run its course through Indian history right from the time when Varnasharm was invented or came into being as a matter of necessity in those dark days when all sorts of superstitions crept into Indian life to corrupt its tradition of philosophy and culture. A strong believer in the dignity of man and equality of all men, Anand is naturally shocked at the inhuman way the untouchables and coolies are treated by those who belong to the superior caste.

Mulk Raj Anand is a champion of underdogs because of his graphic portrayal of Indian society including its unpleasant aspects and categorical indictment of the hypocritical values, mutilating India's social harmony and dynamism. Anand believes that man can make his own destiny. He has immense faith in man and his powers. He is convinced of the immense manpower to master nature through rationalism, science and technology, and visualises a renovated social order in India, base on reason and faith in human ability. Being an artist, Anand does not pour his sentiment in black and white, but gives artistic form to the painful experience of a man of sensibility who has seen the terrible evil from close quarters. His protest and warning lie within the framework of his art.

Time was when Indians were diffident about expressing themselves in English, a language that is alien and yet not quite. Indian novelists have now proved their ability and Indo-English fiction has acquired an identity of its own. Yet not all the fictional attempts of all the novelists stand the test of time. Mulk Raj Anand certainly enjoys the reputation of being a major figure in the field of Indo-English fiction along with Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. He has to his credit sixteen novels, twelve collections of short stories and more than twenty five books on art and other general subjects and hundreds of articles.

Anand is Dickensian in his ultra-sensitivity to the existence of social evils in protean forms. In fact, it is the keen awareness of the human predicament that propelled him into creative writing. Therefore the themes which Anand has chosen for his novels are based on such problems as casteism and human suffering caused by a variety of factors-political, economic, social and cultural. He refuses to accept "this tenancy on the earth as a death on the instalment plan" and says categorically: "I would no longer live by the dead ideas of traditional philosophies, the ritual of the old religions or by the tame words of the classics.' He tries to create in the readers an urgent awareness of the dehumanizing social evils, to stir the springs of tenderness in them and to activise them for the removal of these evils in order that a desirable, just social order may come into being.

It is a commonplace to call Anand a champion of the downtrodden. But what is striking is that in his novels he reveals a triune intuition of the inhumanity of man, his exploitative nature and his possible redemption. Anand rejects all institutions in favour of man as the convincing solution could be found in man "the maker and the breaker of Worlds. That is why with great religious seal Anand repeats in his novels: "I believe in Man!"

The protagonists in Anand's novels belong either to the class of the suffering (Bakha, Munoo, Gangu) or to the sensitive group of people who suffer seeing others suffer (Lalu, Ananta). Anand takes care to look into the emotional problems of these human beings who are perhaps non-entities in the eyes of society. Anand is aware of their great potential which often remains unrealised as they are trapped by a callous society. In their struggle to free themselves from this situation and create an everyday life for themselves they become heroic.

Anand finds the stratification of society on the basis of caste abominable. The caste system has come to mean nothing but a set of injunctions which damage social cohesion by giving certain sections by society an unfair advantage over others permanently. Though it poses an intractable problem, it is surprising that other writers have not evinced such pronounced interest in the theme of untouchability. Anand launched on his literary career with a short novel *Untouchable* in which he has projected this theme in such significant terms that it includes issues like loss of identity, rootlessness, etc. As this volume has separate essays on *Untouchable*, it is better to move on to the next novel dealing with the same theme.

The Road is a yet smaller novel which shows Anand's continued preoccupation with this significant problem. The novel views the protagonist Bhikhu's situation as expressive of the chronic malaise with which Indian society is stricken. It makes it difficult for him to survive with dignity and unimpaired self-esteem. Despite his resentment and rebellious spirit he finds himself fighting a losing battle. Significantly the novel ends with the hero heading for Delhi. The road becomes the central metaphor in the novel and it is suggested that the road to emancipation from degradation will not be built so long as conditions remain what they are. The narrative also implies that the road to freedom is long enough to break his spirit. M.K. Naik is right when he says, "this long short story is too flimsy to bear the weight of an effective symbolic finale" as the ending makes Anand's views quite ambiguous.

Untouchable is a short novel and Anand's unwavering purpose and reined temper make for the taut construction and singular force of the book. But the economy practised in *The Road* does not prove to be an artistic virtue as Bhikhu, the protagonist, and Dhooli Singh, the second major figure, claim importance alternately as a result of which the growth of Bhikhu is not effectively brought out. Anand also introduces the traditional romantic tale of lovers and it again does not contribute to the vivification of the central theme.

The caste system is an indigenous phenomenon in our country but the system has universal dimensions and so the *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* which deal with the evil of the class system cover a wider range. These proletarian novels bring into sharp focus the capitalist domination which cuts across caste, cultural, intellectual and racial distinctions since money and power are the main factors involved here. Anand charts the course of life of Munoo and Gangu, both Kshatriyas by birth; *Coolie* portrays the tribulations of an individual whereas *Two Leaves and a Bud* pictures the same problem as a group experience.

Two Leaves and a Bud starts with an exodus to the promised land, Assam. But it is against this idyllic background that "the drama of exploitation" is enacted. De la Havre with his endless discussions on the theme bores both his beloved and the reader alike. What remain~ unsaid by him is also revealed to us through Barbara's reading of Havre's writings. The club scenes are too many and the hunt scene has a farcical effect. But as there is no constant shifting of scenes as in *Coolie*, the novel achieves greater concentration and has the effect of a grim tragedy. The tragedy caused by this social structure is so horrifying that in both these novels death has been referred to as "happy death" or "release." C.D. Narasimhaiah 's comment is relevant here: "Death has ceased to frighten these poor-they are past all fright; it is life that is a threat, and death is a release.'"

Epical in sweep and panoramic in purview, *Coolie* pictures the various experiences of Munoo, a hill boy, at the hands of exploiters at four different places. The novel is remarkable for the largeness of its canvas, the multiplicity of its characters and the variety of its episodes. However, the focal point is always Munoo and the pathos is sustained by the emphasis on his innocence against the merciless, mechanical rhythm of society.

A sweeper is at least assured of his place in society because of the indispensability of his work. The coolie has no such assurance and lives under the perpetual threat of losing his job. It is no wonder therefore that Munoo in *Coolie* drifting from place to place, job to job appears virtually rootless and incapable of finding a place for himself in society. As the class system has proved more divisive, Anand's attack is correspondingly vehement. His eagerness to drive home his message weighs too heavily on the artistic pattern of the novel and the elaborate presentation of Mrs. Mainwaring in the last chapter is certainly an avoidable appendage.

The themes of caste and class systems have been dexterously fused in *The Big Heart*. Anand defines casteism in all its complexity for we see it not in its rigidity but in its insidiousness. The relations between Lala Murli Dhar and Kasera Gokul Chand, the managing partners, expected to be harmonious on account of money considerations seem strained because of caste differences. We see how the two evils co-exist and coalesce in society. Anand emphasises here the impossibility of avoiding contact with castes other than one's own as a result of the changed condition of life and the increasing use of machinery for a variety of purposes. The novel also shows the pro and anti-machinery reactions and suggests that we should respond more favourably to the impersonal processes of modern scientific and technological development. The machine may have demonic force but man should learn to master this labour-saving public benefactor which is vital for progress.

Religion is not dealt with at length in any particular novel but there is hardly any novel that lacks a contemptuous reference to God or religion. Anand's aim is to project exploitation in all its facets, the practice of religion being one. Counterfeit sainthood is a ubiquitous phenomenon in our hoary land and Anand covers the priests of different religions Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity with contempt and crushes them beyond redemption because they have reduced religion to rank religiosity and cross communalism.

Prof. Verma's observation in *The Sword and the Sickle* that religion is "as widespread as small-pox in the lands watered by the Ganges'" underlines the fact that the sham and corruption promoted in the name of religion are ubiquitous enough to merit critical attention. Anand is certainly Marxian in his objection to "the crafty scheme" of the priests who opiate the credulous masses against all earthly miseries inherent in the evil social structure. The institution of religion has often proved detrimental to the progress of man as it has created either passivity or narrow orthodoxy and fanaticism in man. Anand's denunciation of religion has its origin in his very philosophy of life:

> To me there is only one vast universe with man, woman and other living beings, face to face with the elements, and others, alone, but seeking human solidarity. There are not two worlds, heaven above and the earth below. There is no "spiritual" world separate from the "material" world. The soul is body and the body is soul. The possible emergence of human beings as individuals, through the struggle for illumination, exercised through the will, and through continuous experience, and through the search for every creative possibility, may lead to the making of the individual, to "Destination Man.'"

Hindu-Muslim adjustment is a gigantic national problem in India and it is a horrid mockery of our ardent avowals of national integration and the blessed assurances enshrined in our constitution. In *Death of a Hero* Anand projects last phase in the life of Maqbool, a member of the Kashmir National Movement, sent to rally the people of Baramula, which is in the grip of the Muslim fanatics. It is ironic that the so-called "war of liberation," "jehad" (the holy war), liberates the souls of the people from their "corporeal frame." Maqbool has admirable qualities such as love of his country, lofty idealism verging on the romantic and compassion for the suffering. Yet he is too passive to be regarded as a hero.

Critics have exalted him beyond his deserts and invested him with a tragic dignity which his portrayal in the novel does not warrant Anand is unhappy that education, expected to be a powerful instrument of social reconstruction, has not served its purpose. The prevalent educational system is an imitative one and so unrelated to the life of the Indians. The acquisition of sapless bookish knowledge does not offer much help and as recruitment to jobs is made on the basis of recommendations rather than on merit the country faces the twin problems of unemployment and underemployment.

We have an emphatic illustration of such a situation in *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts.* It dramatises the last days of Noor, a rank student's career. As his status as the son of a confectioner is hereditarily determined, his academic distinction does not ensure personal advancement. The teacher like the priest is a recurrent type in Anand's novels and Shah Nawaz in *Morning Face* is a lone foil to the crowd of corrupt teachers.

It is noteworthy that Anand's heroes are either educated men or lovers of learning. Noor, Prince Victor, Maqbool and Lal Singh represent the educated group. They turn out to be failures in life which in itself is a reflection of what education means in India. Anand himself has been a victim of this educational system and so his attack is quite vehement:

> If education is the transmission of life from the living, through the living, to the living, then we do not know how to describe the system of teaching that prevails here.

Anand, the champion of the outcastes, pictures in his novels the predicament of woman too, for she is another victim of the rigid social order. At home woman is often made to act the part of an unpaid domestic servant with a marginally superior status. She is treated as an inferior creature, a pleasure-giving commodity or a child-bearing machine. Marriage incites man to be a capricious autocrat.

Anand is quite impartial in his treatment of this theme and he presents both viragos and devoted wives, docile as well as revolutionary women. He is not blind to the existence of Ganga Dasis who can control the private lives of public figures with utterly disastrous results. However, he describes the silly sentimentality of Indian women and their meek acceptance of inferior status advocated by the "diabolical code of priest-made laws." At the same time, he perceives in them a great potential for constructive work which often goes a waste owing to the chauvinistic attitude of the menfolk.

While stressing the need for the emancipation of women, Anand suggests that they should break the ties that bind them to the hearth and boldly venture out into fresh fields. The familiar types of women characters are relegated to the background as contributory characters and the nonconformist women are given full realisation in his novels. He pictures woman's place in a fast-changing society. He "brings out well how the strains of the new situation modify, warp or transmute into yet finer forms the traditional responses of the women.

In *Death of a Hero* hope is placed in Maqbool's younger sister, Nur. Maqbool hopes that she would inherit the poet's compassion and save mankind from religious bigotry. The widowed Maya in *The Village* breaks through the shackles of vicious society and joins her lover, Lal Singh. Though Maya's turning into a revolutionary (in *The Sword and the Sickle)* "in a flickering of an eyelid" to assist her husband is not convincing enough we see in her character women's change in role in the modem world.

Janki in *The Big Heart* dares to live with Ananta, though their relationship has no social sanction. Janki ranks higher than a wife in devotion and that is further proved after Ananta's death. Her ailment as a T.B. patient does not break her spirit. Guided by the spiritual mentor Puran Singh she continues Ananta's mission after his death by organizing the women comrades for a revolutionary life and by living with and for others. She thus emerges as a New woman. However modem and revolutionary Maya and Janki may be, their role is only subsidiary because they try to propagate the feminine ideal of their lovers by identifying themselves with it. *The Old Woman and the Cow* is the only novel in which Anand spins the plot around a woman character. Gauri, the heroine, falls in line with Anand's suppressed heroes. But while most of his heroes register their protest within the framework of an evil society, Gauri sheds her narrow domestic coils before they can strangle her to death, and escapes into the refreshing world of modernity. Whereas most of the heroes face premature earth, she emerges as an awakened woman, with a fresh lease of life. When her husband Panchi hits her, the enlightened Gauri retorts: "if you strike me again, I will hit you back." Her brief experience as a self-reliant nurse and the guidance of Colonel Mahindra give her the necessary courage. Her decisive walk out and her choice of a non-domestic profession is the context of woman's predicament in India is a tremendous act of protest.

This is effectively illustrated by the skilful, modified use of the *Ramayana* myth. It enhances the thematic pattern of the novel. Gauri is a "modern version of Sita" but Panchi has very little of Ram a in him. Gauri refuses to be hoodwinked by the sanctimonious humbug about submission and self-effacement. Anand's modification of the myth suggests that the original has become outdated and irrelevant in the modem context. It also disproves the doctrine of woman's inferior position as the weaker sex. She is no longer an encumbrance on man and the prospect of her economic independence makes her an autonomous being. *The Old Woman and the Cow* along with *The Big Heart* has come to represent the high water mark of Anand's fictional genius. This is partly because of the successful women portraits in these novels.

As a responsible artist Anand suggests various answers to the human problems dealt with in his novels, refraining from imposition of any kind. As said earlier, Anand is aware that man has to turn inward and find the right solutions. He should develop a "big heart" that cherishes values like equality, human tenderness, religious tolerance, devotion to duty, liberty, etc. We need no institutionalised religion to advocate these values. Anand calls it "religion without religion." Human suffering at times cannot be avoided. But it can certainly be alleviated by the "togetherness" of men: "one man is the other: other men are in one: all men are brothers. The recognition of that truth is the next promised world revolution which literature may help to bring about, against all the odds of our age-so tragic and yet potentially so full of hope for man."

Anand feels that a keen awareness of the predicament should whet man's questioning spirit, which in turn should enable him to shed all fatalism and revolt against the oppressive forces of society.

All of Anand's heroes do become acutely aware of their predicament at some point or other in their lives and they begin to search for the meaning of life and destiny. This is often referred to in the novels as "the journey into the unknown." When involved in such a quest the characters invariably grow. In *Confession of a Lover,* Krishan begins his search when he is disillusioned with the educational system and the society he lives in. The growth of the character is reckoned in terms of realisation and understanding. He speaks with conviction thus:

> The important thing is to be-to become rebellion itself! Free! Free! Free! Utterly free! Rebellion and freedom! ... Not acceptance and death! ...It is only through rebellion against everything false that I have written poetry ... Anand I want to embrace the people-even those who are illiterate and down and degraded! Because once we are free, all of us will grow and discover marvellous things! ... We will become a big people! We will make a new life!

In *The Bubble,* fourth in the series of Anand's autobiographical novels, he presents the young man, Krishan Chander Azad, pursuing a doctorate under the guidance of Prof. Dawes Hicks. In this novel we find that Krishan wants to transcend the blindness around him and see what has been buried inside him under the debris of the broken spirit. Hence this novel like *Confession of a Lover* is in the great tradition of the *bildungsroman.* Putting it all down on paper is Krishan's way of enduring human condition.

This process of self-discovery begins when he encounters Irene Rhys (in England), an artist who liberates him in more ways than one. Irene's casual affair with "Casanova" Mehta arouses in him pangs of intense sexual jealousy but he is soon liberated from conventional male-chauvinistic notions of sexual morality.

Irene leaves for Ireland to join Maud Gonne in the Irish freedom movement. Krishan who visits her there is liberated in yet another sense. He becomes more aware of his role as an Indian and as a Gandhian. He comes back to London to write a highly acclaimed thesis and gets ready to return to India to join the Gandhian movement and write a novel on Bakha.

Rimbaud in one of his poems says, "We live inside a bubble as in a womb. And in this we grow. But at times we can see ourselves in it." This passage casually quoted by Irene holds the key to the entire novel. Krishan realises that there can be no novel writing without acute awareness of the human predicament. Living inside a bubble Krishan sees himself in it and in this he grows. The scales fall from his eyes. So *The Bubble* is not merely the story of exile, it is the story of a journey into the interior. Young Krishan invokes Joyce and his *Portrait of the Artist* more than once. Like Joyce he forges in "the smithy of his soul" a confessional novel.

Structurally *The Bubble* is divided into ten parts. Some parts are in the form of a diary, some in the form of letters. Anand makes a minimum use of the narrative form. Shifting the tone from a letter to a journal to a straight narrative is not an easy task. A major weakness of this novel is the structural imbalance that one cannot but notice when the writer moves from the confessional/personal tone of a journal or a letter to a straight narrative. Hence we have instances where the letters become too narrative and journals where Anand reproduces lengthy conversations.

However, this is made up by the sheer artistic presence of Krishan and Irene. Remembering the uplook in Irene's eyes as she went in the court as a revolutionary (that is the last vision the hero has of her) Krishan vows:

> As long as I can look, I will try and see into the farthest distances; As long as I can walk I will move at a faster pace; As long as I can stand, I will struggle.

Here we have the authentic Anand's voice. This, in fact, is Anand's credo as an artist. Krishan becomes aware that there are so many freedoms to seek and that there is no escape from history. "Even if I could not be effective, I was in it, for good or ill." It is this "excitement of venturing out toward courage" that makes the novel significant in understanding Anand the man and the writer.

Anand's passionate espousal of the cause of the dispossessed in his novels has been attributed to his alleged Marxist ideological persuasions by some critics who forget the fact that in his novels Anand in a way turns the Marxist formula upside down to show that it is society that has betrayed or failed the human potential. Indeed, what he holds up for admiration is the striving of the individual to create the utmost freedom for himself within a coercive system.

It is undeniable that some of Anand's novels have a propagandistic tone because Anand is eager to ram home his humanistic message. The poet-figure in his novels advocates "the wisdom of the heart" and *Karuna*. In novels where poets do not figure Anand has introduced some "big hearted" idealistic characters who unfortunately indulge in elaborate moralisings and often act as the author's mouthpiece. However, Anand's central aim is to project his "desire image," what he would like life to be as against what it is. According to him an artist should interpret reality and not reproduce it. His object is not merely to shock his readers by a representation of reality but to stimulate their consciousness.

Anand has exposed social evil in its myriad manifestations and has evocatively presented different layers of human experience in his fiction. His wide reading and travel have enabled him to view humanity at large in a proper perspective. His close association with the underdogs and his passionate recordation of their woes have given his novels a rare cogency and an intimate quality of felt life.

8

Moral Dimensions in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Others

Dieter Riemenschneider's fresh study approaches the Indian novel in English from the angle of its diverse range of readings by Indian and international critics over a period of six decades, or from the beginnings of a critical discourse in the 1930s until the present time.

Following the development of both the emergence of the modern Indian novel in English since the mid-1930s and its critical evaluation, Riemenschneider illustrates the, at times controversial reaction to a 'new' literary genre, as well as the national and international shifts of the critical literary discourse from the earlier close-reading approach of New Criticism to the more recent employment of postmodern and postcolonial theorems.

The terms "modern" and "Indian" are elusive for no common consensus has yet emerged from the debate among the scholars and intellectuals regarding "Indianness" and "modernity." One faces a similar problem especially when "new morality" is deprecated as no morality at all. It may, however, be made clear here that the word "morality" is not used to denote "righteousness" but a set of values that vary from class to class, from individual to individual and from time to time. Every society moves with a set of conventions which are subjected to periodic adjustment in accordance with the time and situation. Morals, in a way, are the sumtotal of values of a particular time. Fiction as a form of art, deeply concerned with society, reflects the thoughts of an age. It has the responsibility to shape the morals of a society and an obligation to be shaped by the accepted social morals.

New literature and new morality are but authentic and sincere responses to the historical and social conditions, and through these responses create a new value system. The code of morality the characters of the Indo-English novel conform to does no doubt bear the signs of the Western influence, but none can accuse them of being un-Indian. Similarly branding the Indo-English novelists, who strive to bring in the current of new morality into their works, as propagandists of evil influences of the Western ideas or condemning them as amoralists, is nothing but obscurantism.

Let it be made clear at the outset 'that the dimensions of the new morality in modern Indo-English fiction are not very imposing. Hesitations surround each move and each aspect of it. This may be attributed to the typical nature of the Indian middle class to which the writer belongs. This class, though innovative in urge, is also the most tradition-bound.

The modem Indo-English novelist explores and examines the relationship of man with his fellowmen, vis-à-vis the social forces at work around him in all their bewildering complexity. Thus it covers the entire gamut of human experience. The examination of the nature of "new morality," which is so elusive and so chameleonic in all the writers is neither possible nor desirable. The present inquiry is, therefore, restricted to the study of the new morality in the context of man-woman relationship discernible in the novels of only three novelists namely, Mulk Raj Anand, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal.

The Old Woman and the Cow (1960) is Anand's only novel in which a woman has been chosen as the central character. Significantly, Anand uses myth as a part of his technique for the first time in his novel. It is the story of Gauri that meek and suffering, gentle and uncomplaining country woman offering a close parallel to Sita in her mute acquiescence. After her marriage with Panchi, a peasant boy from Chota Piplan village, Gauri adjusts patiently to a life of unremitting hardships, squalor, pain, and even insults thrust on her by her mother-in-law and her husband. But the situation worsens when her chastity is questioned. She pleads for her innocence and purity but to no avail. Dnven out of her in-laws's home, she goes back to her mother where a still worse fate awaits her. Her mother mercilessly sells her off to an old, lecherous Seth. The transaction is justified as a "choice between my Gauri and my Cow." Firmly rooted in the Indian culture, Gauri is convinced that her namesake Goddess Gauri will protect her. It is this conviction that makes her resist the enticing advances of the Seth.

Two other instances from the text can be cited that show Gauri as a traditional Hindu wife-full of sacrifice and forgiveness. She defends her husband against her parents's criticism for his brutal beating. She is infuriated again, when her mother throws the suggestion of securing another husband for her. Though forsaken, her faith in her husband remains unshaken.

Col. Mahindra's association, in whose clinic Gauri is employed as a nurse, brings about a metamorphosis in her. From the gentle meek and docile "cow's acquiescent visage," she is transformed in to'a self-willed woman with an individuality of her own.

Col. Mahindra helps her get back to her husband, but the reunion is only a brief interlude in her life of misery and travail. Instigated by the village gossip, Panchi compels her to prove her chastity. Gauri desperately realises that she has no means to prove her chastity, for the Mother Earth would not open for her her womb and receive her as it did for Sita, nor would any god come forward to rescue her from humiliation. She, therefore, guided by her own inner voice, refuses to surrender to further humiliation and oppression as she had hitherto been doing every now and then. Before she takes a final decision, the novelist presents her captured in her vacillating mood:

> for a brief moment the thought that the earth must open up to rescue her as it had opened up to receive Sita, came as an echo from the memory of her race. But the ground was hard and solid under her feet, and showed no signs of opening up to prove her innocence. She waved her head to forget Sita, and thought of the road to the town.

It is here that the parallel of Sita myth gets disentangled. Gauri, graduated into a modern Indian woman, now realises that her salvation lies not in a mute and docile obedience to a society corrupted through ages, but in an active resistance to it and in asserting her own individuality. Her exposure to the modern urban world (through Dr. Mahindra) opens up for her new and bright vistas of hope and liberation. That is why she defies her family, dissociates herself from it completely and takes a crucial decision of living her new life on an altogether new basis. Bearing Panchi's child in her womb, she returns to Dr. Mahindra's clinic and resumes her job of a nurse. Instead of looking down on the earth, she looks up to the sun to draw sustenance and "energies from inside her .... Rhythm of love for the unborn babe urged her on."

Mahindra enters Gauri's consciousness at the moment when she wishes the traditional gods were dead for her. He is the modern god under whose protection she will dedicate her service for the welfare of mankind. Anand, through the ultimate transformation of Gauri, attacks the hypocrisy and the perverse sexual desire of the Seth and the priest which pass for religion under "the garb of religiosity." Gauri's mute defiance against fake gods of these hypocrites gains in effect when she withdraws her protest against them thinking that these gods wreak vengeance against her. At this critical juncture, the arrival of Colonel Mahindra dressed in army clothes, holding a leather bag in his hand, is symbolic of the advent of the modem gods decorated with virtues like wisdom, sense of responsibility, service and love.

Anand uses the Sitamyth only to explode it at the climactic point, for he intends to show through the transformation of Gauri, how man must depend on himself rather than on God or supernatural powers to shape his destiny. Anand the artist and Anand the humanist work in harmony to paint a vivid picture of the pitiable plight of the Indian woman, especially in the rural society, and hint at the changes that are in the offing through the heroic struggle of Gauri against man's selfishness, greed, hypocrisy, hide-bound traditions and superstitious dogmas.

Meenakshi Mukherjee complains of Anand's "negative use of myth" because "this novel is unique among Indian novels in rejecting rather than extolling the time-honoured womanly virtues of patience and submission." Anand, it must be clearly seen, neither makes a "negative use of myth" nor does he reject the womanly virtues of patience and submission. On the contrary, he re-creates the Indian classical myth of the Ramayana in modem context to suit his purpose. Gauri symbolises the strength and purity of Sita. Her inner transformation is achieved with grace, poise and delicacy. The way she prefers to walk out of Panchi's life calmly makes her relive the momentous experience of Sita. She manages to retain her feminine dignity, despite braving the cruel strokes of destiny and society's oppression and indignities. Gauri, therefore, to quote a critic, "is an epitome of excellence, strength and virtue." She is the modem version of Sita. The novel suggests continuous parallels and links between the "primitive past and the desolate present," thereby presenting an absorbing image of the human predicament. In the prefatory note, Anand states: "if the book is bad like its prototype, then it is not because I don't see hope, but because I am conscious of the present despair." Despite sadness, there is abundant hope and faith which the transformation of Gauri symbolises. Notwithstanding occasional direct and inartistic didactic notes Anand has created in Gauri one of the most memorable female characters in the entire corpus of Indian fiction in English.

Anita Desai is another novelist whose preoccupation with the woman's inner world, her sensibility, sulking frustration and storm raging inside her mind bring her closer to the novelists advocating for a new morality. The central theme of her novels is the existential predicament of woman as an individual. She projects this problem through incompatible couples-acutely sensitive wives, and dutiful but un-understanding, insensitive husbands. Her fictional milieu is the India in transition with its cultural and ethical values in the melting pot. In each of her novels one could sense the author's urge for a way of living which would respond to the innermost yearnings of the Indian woman for self emancipation and self-dignity.

Cry, the Peacock (1963), her first novel, narrates the story of Maya's dull marital relationship with Gautama. Highly sensitive and poetic in temperament, Maya wishes to have nothing in her marred life except that Gautama should be responsive enough to her sensitive and sentimental longings for him. Her husband, a busy, prosperous, rational, and middle-aged lawyer, finds himself too much engrossed in his affairs to respond to her demands thus creating a distance from her, partly 10 years and partly in temperament. Their marital life, therefore, suffers disintegration. She records, "How important is sex where not union but communion is concerned!" It is communion that she seeks-the true marriage in which body, mind and soul unit the sort which the peacock seeks when it shrieks out its inside in its shrill, intense mating calls. She has a scale of values far beyond Gautama's comprehension. Through her tragic end, the novelist stresses the great yearning of the woman to be understood by her male partner.

The dissonance of Maya-Gautama marital relationship is re-enacted in the Monisha-Jiban marriage in Voices in the City (1965). Monisha is married into a conservative Hindu joint family with a medieval outlook. Even her younger sister, Amla, when she visits Monisha in Calcutta, cannot suppress her anguish and despair:

> Amla wondered how and why ... Monisha had been married to this boring non-entity, this blind moralist ... this rotund minute minded and limited official. Why had their father chosen him from amongst other young men surely known to him? ... Was it merely because Jiban was so unquestionably safe, sound and secure, so utterly predictable? Or was it because fathers did, unconsciously, spite their daughters who were unavoidable to them? And why had Monisha with that powerful silent stubbornness of hers never rebelled?

Sensitive like Maya, Monisha also feels desperately lonely and lost "the lost princess of a fairy-tale, doomed to destruction." Wedded to a pathetically wooden and insensitive husband, she knows no intimacies, no communion? no mutual understanding, no real sharing of the partnership. The marriage wrecks despite its seeming facade. Imprisoned in a huge oppressive joint family, the childless young Monisha's claustrophobia and exasperation culminate in the frantic fits of frenzy and hallucination leading her to suicide. In Monisha's suicide is implied the novelist's diatribe against the male-dominated world. The fractured and starved life of Monisha in the absence of "the element of love" is doomed to destruction. And through Monisha's suppressed yearning for privacy and a little dignity, the novelist seems to be protesting against the outdated values and mores. She wishes the woman to be respected as an individual in her own right rather than an object taken for granted. The incident of Monisha's taking a few rupees from the cupboard without Jiban's permission highlights the Indian woman's economic dependence-a sort of soul-destroying parasitic existence where the wife has to seek permission for paying her brother's hospital bill. Her tragic sufferance throws into bold relief the predicament of the educated unemployed woman in our times.

Where Shall We Go This Summer? (1975), Anita Desai's next novel, projects the theme of alienation and incommunicability in marital life in a more controlled and less exotic manner. The loneliness of the female protagonist, Sita, is symbolic of the loneliness of a woman a wife and a mother-a loneliness conditioned by family and society. Ironically she is the modem version of the mythological Sita. She takes to smoking, and neurotic outbursts obviously as a result of growing incompatibility and unbearable fever and fret of urban domesticity.

The wife of an upper middle-class factory owner, mother of four children, greying at the age of forty, Sita now finds in her fifth pregnancy the impetus to revolt against her milieu, the indifference of her family and the cruel violence that she finds in the human and nonhuman world around her. She does not want the fifth child nor is she prepared for an abortion. She wants to "keep" it; she does not want it to be born. That is why abandoning Bombay in terror, leaving Raman in despair she comes to Manori island in a mood of doubt and desperation, in order to achieve the miracle of not giving birth." Sita's wish may sound ludicrous and mad. But through this mad crase she does succeed in asserting her individual identity.

In a flashback, we see a desperate woman unable to control her nausea and hysteria, and being swept off in a whirlwind of confusion and fright. Obviously the pent-up misery of her isolation in the family, the indifferent nature of her husband and children have driven her to this plight.

Implicit in her plight is a two-pronged protest. One is against the kind of life with its all-pervasive violence: "More and more she lost all feminine, all maternal belief in childbirth, all faith in it, and began to fear it as yet one more act of violence and murder in a world that had more of them in it than she could take." The other is against the role of a breeding machine the society has thrust on her. She has had four children with pride and pleasure, her husband was puzzled therefore when the fifth time she told him she was pregnant. She did so with a quite paranoiac show of rage, fear and revolt.

Sita's decision to return to her husband, in no sense, signifies her failure. It, on the contrary, suggests that she has learnt patience and courage to face life with all its ups and downs. The positive ending of the novel registers a distinct change in the novelist's outlook. It gives a lie to the commonly held opinion that Anita Desai is a novelist predominantly interested in depicting the feminine abnormal sensibility' and that her heroines bring violent end to their lives.

Sita's struggle symbolises the intelligent and sensitive woman's revolt against the male smugness and philistinism trampling all finer values in marital life. Her final return to normal humdrum existence is suggestive of her sanity and courage and the teasing ambiguity of life.

The protest against the denial of freedom and against the outdated social opinion and orthodox treatment of woman becomes more pointed and more trenchant in Nayantara Sahgal's novels. Her concept of a free woman transcends the limits of economic or social freedom and becomes a mental or emotional attitude. The need for freedom for woman, according to her, does not merely mean the defiance of old-established conventions, it must also make her aware of herself as an individual and refuse to tolerate injustice.

Modern and liberal in outlook, Sahgal believes in "new humanism" and a "new morality," according to which woman is not to be taken as a "sex object and glamour girl, fed on fake dreams of perpetual youth, lulled into a passive role that requires no individual identity" but as man's equal and honoured partner. In each of her novels, she pleads for the new marital morality based on mutual trust, consideration, generosity, and absence of pretence, selfishness and self-centredness. Her artistic vision is based on this new morality with profound respect for the affirmative values of life. The novelist can be seen ventilating her own rage and indignation through Vishal at the people who feel that women's "sphere is sexual and their job procreation." Women for Vishal are "the subdued sex, creatures not yet emerged from the chrysalis, for whom the adventure of self-expression had not yet begun."

Carefully distinguishing the role of a serious artist from that of a mere entertainer, he believes that the artist 'has a mission ... he has to create a vision of the future, he has to have a dream of his own and to suggest possibilities from it. I think it's the artist's job and the writer's job particularly ... to show the way.' And she too shows the way unmistakably in each of her novels. The new morality based on freedom from fear, frank communication, and mutual love, according to her, can create that "oxygen of understanding" which can save the present generation from the explosive' 'psychic trauma of marital conflict." In This Time of Morning, the changing social conditions are reflected in the way young Nita and Rashmi behave. Nita is shown grumbling when she is not allowed to smoke. Although she is twenty three, she doesn't want to marry at all because the "creatures her parents have in mind for her are either so awful or midgets or men who never open their mouth." Moreover marriage, she is afraid, would hedge her new-found liberty. Rashmi's divorce and her extra-marital relationship with Neil are not to be mistaken for a "tasteless parody of a transplanted modernity," but an inner urge for communication and emotional involvement of the self.

Sahgal's three novels-This Time of Morning, Storm in Chandigarh and The Day in Shadow can be grouped together not only from the thematic point of view but also from the point of view of the sustained moral vision of the novelist that shapes and directs the des times of the female protagonists. The main male and female characters are portrayed alike. The heroes are either diplomats or business magnates, intelligent, and keenly concerned with the progress of the country. The heroines, Rashmi, Saroj and Simrit wives of the social high-ups, hypersensitive, yearning for individual freedom are portrayed as disgruntled and dejected in their marital relationship and as a result of this, they are actively contemplating divorce with one difference that in the earlier two novels, the divorce is just suggested in order to enable the heroines to set themselves "free from fear" whereas in The Day in Shadow divorce actually takes place, and with it comes the actual realisation of misery, the economic difficulties, the feeling of loneliness and a score of other existential problems for Simrit.

The female protagonist's struggle for freedom derives directly from the novelist's personal experience: the study of the deathly struggle that accompanies the attempts of an Indian woman to liberate herself from the moral and social pressures that combine with economic dependence to exercise a crippling power over middle-class women is marked with intense indignation as well as sensitivity and compassion. Sahgal confesses this in an article:

> In this book I tried to figure out something that has happened to me-the shattering experience of divorce .... I wanted to show how even in a free country like ours, where women are equal citisens, a woman can be criminally exploited without creating a ripple.

The need for individual freedom continues to be the central concern of Sahgal's novels. That is why her female characters, so deeply and loyally rooted in the Indian culture, struggle to be free and full human beings in their own right. She makes Simrit come out vehemently:

> I hate this century except for the freedom it brought for countries and people, especially for women. But it is barbaric otherwise, full of rotten, elastic standards and the worship of money. I hate the whole mess of human affairs.

Vishal and Raj, intellectually superior to the rest of the characters, have a "Herculean task" to perform because Saroj and Simrit are not only individuals, they are the symbols of "a culture, a tradition, a patient enduring passivity." She can be casually exploited because they are "eminently exploitable."

Sahgal's characters live an intensely passionate life-life free from all inhibitions and taboos. According to her, Saroj's premarital act of sex has nothing to do with the pollution of flesh, promiscuity or immorality. The humanist in Sahgal champions for the new human values to blast its way through the jungle of superstition, pretence and seeming facade of politeness. She makes it clear:

> Perhaps both in India and the permissive West, the deciding factor before we act or judge the action of others, should be the aesthetics of a particular situation. Is it guided by love and aspiration, or greed or gluttony? Is there truth and beauty in it, or only desire for gain?"

A trenchant defender of human values, Sahgal wishes the generation to come out of the shackles of bondage to the air of freedom and freshness, to break off the orthodox rules and conventions that make people fearful of each other. She is appalled at the enormous waste-the whole mindless mess going on down the ages with never a shaft of new light on it, men and women contorting into moulds, battering into sameness, the divine individual spark guttering out" Somewhere under the sun," she yearns, "there must be another way to live with relentless honesty where the only cruelty would be pretence." She hopes it to be possible only when "people accept each other in truth."

From the foregoing discussion, it must have been noticed that there has been a visible shift from the needed liberation in the author's attitude to love, marriage, and divorce towards increasing permissiveness. But happily it isn't the permissiveness of the neurotic exposure of nudity paraded in the guise of new morality in several best-sellers of the West. With this saving grace of artistic restraint on the part of our novelists, one can safely infer that the social changes are changing something deep inside the individual which the creative artist strives to express and which is being felt not by the politicians, the social reformer or the sociologist, but by the writer alone who accepts the fate of being condemned, alienated and labelled as amoralist.

Critics may also decry their works as propaganda. It has, therefore, to be clearly seen that in these novels the moral flavour in the form of propaganda is not entirely separable extra but integral to the theme, action and characterisation. The urge for new morality and new human values is wholly consumed in these novels by the white heat of the novelists's creative impulse.

9

Anand's Short Stories: The Image of the Indian Woman and other Themes

The traditional Indian society has been patriarchal resulting into the subordination, marginalisation and commodification of women. Even the Indian epics bear it out. Woman is enjoined by the Indian scriptures to play a certain role and not to transcend it.

Woman has always been supposed to be sub ordinateto man. This predicament of the Indian woman is best represented in Hindi by Munshi Premchand, as illustrated in his excellent short story kafan (the shroud), wherein Ghisu and Madhav do not think it appropriate even to buy a shroud for the latter's dead wife.

A similar kind of delineation of women in India is displayed by Mulk Raj Anand, one of the heavy weights in the Indo-Anglican fiction and short story writing. The prime concern, however, in his novels and short stories has been the plight and predicament of the untouchables, the oppressed who were treated almost like sub-humans for ages. But, be it as it may, some of his short stories expose the exploitation of women by the male–chauvinistic Indian society, wherein women are subjected to inhuman injunctions. Women in the society are assigned only two jobs:baking bread and begetting progeny. Mulk Raj Anand also tries to expose the same thing in English. Many of his short stories are devoted to the theme of the suppression of women in the Indian society. The women he depicts are characteristic of the Indian milieu and ethos. Anand very realistically and efficaciously utilises the image of a caged bird in some of his short stories to bring out an analogy between the detained bird and the symbolically enslaved Indian woman, who is helpless and unable to undertake anything on her own. The story that best exemplifies the predicament of women through the symbol of the caged bird is Lajwanti. Lajwanti is the story of the young village girl, Lajwanti, whose husband is away at college. Her debauched brother-in law, Jaswant has an evil eye on her, as he whenever has a chance, tries to sexually harass and assault her.

Controlling the pervert Jaswant is just impossible for the innocuous Lajwanti. Lajwanti tries, as for as possible for her, to shun him and even slaps him once. But she finds herself helpless and desolate, for her mother-in-law ignores Jaswant's advances. As a last resort, she returns to her mother's, but she is sent back. Eventually, in the end, she tries to submerge herself, but is saved. Life becomes a curse for her, as she says – "There is no way for me... I am condemned to live." The caged maina which she carries with her is symbolically representative of her own beleaguered situation. She talks to the bird with a feeling of utter despair, but the maina only flutters its wings in the cage. Her long absence at home creates doubt and therefore Jaswant sets out to search for her.

Her father does not like her to return. He does not look at her face because he believes that adaughter returning to her father is the most condemnable disgrace for a father. She is treated like a guest.

Her father again takes her back to her husband's home. Lajwanti becomes lifeless and asks the maina on her way: "My maina, tell me now what will happen? And I do not know if Jaswant will relent and not pursue me anymore. But perhaps now that my father has brought me back, I will allow my self to be eaten".

Her father, while returning, says: "Kill her if you like. But don't let her come to me without the lap full of son. I shall not be above to survive the disgrace if she comes again". Being unable to bear the treatment, she jumps into a well, but is saved. When she is resuscitated, she first sees the caged maina. Lajwanti's plight and predicament are shown through the constantly recurring symbol of the caged maina.

The short story Lullaby is a deep working into the psyche of a young mother, as she is seen rocking her dying son in her lap and recalling the memories of her lover, while she feeds the machine with handfuls of jute in a factory. Phalini's son, suraj Mukhi is ill. She is reminded of her lover. Her lover, like her husband, Kirodhar, would never know that the lover is the father of the child. She always wishes that the lover should be with her. She wonders what he must be doing in the far off hills. Here also, the symbol of the caged bird is used to describe the helplessness and plight of Phalini. Phalini thinks that her lover was "wandering perhaps happy and free, while she was caged with her child". Phalini's agony is further worsened when the child dies. Anguished, she wails and moans, tearing her hair. Phalini, the caged bird, "slapped her cheeks and beat her palms on her breast in a weired low voice".

The short story Birth is the story of a peasant woman, Parvati who is in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Despite about to deliver, she is made to work at breaking stones. As she is on her way to work, her parturition pangs begin. Her father-in-law is almost invisible on the way to work. Parvati has been blamed that due to her coming into the family, they had to mortgage the land to meet the fares to Delhi. But, her father-in-law's present concern has been the birth of a baby boy. Parvati also believes that a baby boy would compensate everything she has been blamed. She is not deterred by the birth-pain – 'She stamped the earth, as though to beckon it, as Seeta had done asking it to open up and swallow her hour of peril. The earth did not open up, but she steadied a little". The sight of Goddess Kali gives her courage as she lies wriggling in pain on ground. She is reminded of Ramu who had gone to work, leaving her alone to undergo the pain. The story presents the picture of a woman caught between life and death. At the end of the story, we see Parvati putting the baby boy in the basket and going to break stones.

A Village Idyll is related more with love. It presents a happy scenario of youthful love with a rustic backdrop. The symbol of the bird is again used to show the level assigned to Govind and Gauri in the traditional Indian set up. The love birds meet at the village pond and fields. Gauri is relentlessly pursed by Govind – "He leapt towards her like a tiger towards a young doe".

As they enjoy, Govind has to protect Gauri from Lehua, the son of the village land lord. The symbols of the tiger, male bird, young doe and cooing female bird are relevantly suggestive of the features attributed to Govind and Gauri. Parrot in the Cage lays bare the inner agony of an old woman, Rukhmini, again with the help of a caged bird, as the very title implies. Rukhmini, the old woman, has lost everything in the Partition of India. Her only companion during her migration from Lahore to Amritsar is a pet parrot. The parrot caries a tacit suggestion. The parrot keeps asking Rukhmini "Where are you going?" "wandering perhaps happy and free, while she was caged with her child". Phalini's agony is further worsened when the child dies. Anguished, she wails and moans, tearing her hair. Phalini, the caged bird, "slapped her cheeks and beat her palms on her breast in a weired low voice".

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Rukhmini "Where are you going?" and "what are you doing?" She hopes that the Deputy Commissioner might help her in rehabilitating. But she becomes dejected when the Deputy Commissioner pays no heed to her. She is caught in street violence and a lathi-charge by the police. Somehow she is saved. The parrot's repetition "Nitu kithe hai?" continues to haunt her and remind her of her displacement and insecurity. She feels lonely when she says – "Nowhere son, nothing, nothing".

Her alienation is so much that her nearest companion is not a human being, but a caged parrot. Just as the parrot is inescapably caged, similarly, the old woman is also ineradicably destined to undergo miseries and seclusion. The story ends with the pitiable words of Rukhmini – "I don't know where I am! I don't know".

The Tamarind Tree portrays a young mother who can not satisfy her desire for the test of the sharp, sweet tamarind fruit. She has to be veiled at her in laws house with the baseless fear of possible stares at her. The image of the veiled Roopa resembles the caged bird. Roopa wistfully remembers her childhood days of innocence and enjoyment. The over weight of the age old traditions have made it highly impossible for her to talk to her husband. Despite her efforts to obey and please her in-laws, she is reproached. She stands for the traditional Indian woman who tolerates sufferings, agonies silently, giving up her desires like a caged bird with no freedom to fly free.

The Silver Bangles depicts Sajani, a sweeper girl who is given silver bangles on her betrothal by her mother. She is accused by Mrs. Goel of stealing the bangles. It becomes clear at the end of the story that Mrs. Goel is sexually frigid and is jealous of the attraction her husband feels for the girl. Her allegation only proves her inferiority against the sweeper girl. Thus, it remains to be seen that Lajwanti, Roopa, Parvati, Sajani and similar women of Mulk Raj Anand represent the wreched condition of the woman in the traditional Indian society. Mulk Raj Anand, in his book – The Bride's Book of Beauty, gives a very real picture of the low status of women in India – "Obviously, woman in India has sometimes been exalted as a goddess, but mostly pampered as a doll or kept down and oppressed….. the Indian woman nearly drifted along and became bound to man, more and more as a slave, less and less as an individual apart".

Anand's novels have monopolised critical attention to the neglect of his short stories. The table of contents of the present collection will serve as a good illustration of this fact. It is unfortunate that Anand's short stories have been overshadowed by his other writing. Anand's effort to the shorter form is significant both in quality and volume. He has published over a hundred short stories in seven collections between 1934 and 1973. Some short fiction remains to be published.

Anand himself has taken the art of the short story seriously, as his pronouncements at various places indicate. One such pronouncement is, "actually, more than' my novels the short stories, fables and allegories perhaps carry those hunches and inspirations which amount to insights into human beings and through which I have tried to grow into a man myself I mean becoming one. Thus the short fiction in the conditions of the vastness of our landscape afford ground for more sensitiveness, better craftsmanship and intense moments than the epic structure of the novel."

The fact that there are a number of equally valid approaches to his short stories is suggestive of the vitality of his work in this genre. One extreme is represented by the American scholar, Marlene Fisher, who suggests that a single interpretation holds good for all his stones. According to her all the short stories of Anand explore "lostness", internal and external and represent a search for meaning along this path. 'The Lost Child' is a rubric for a great many of the short stones of Mulk Raj Anand. Whether concentrating on the literal lostness of a child at a fair or on a cynical lust-ridden priest who is lost to himself and to his God or on a young daughter-in-law who is desolately alone in the midst of her new husband's family. Anand treats this aspect of the human condition with an astonishing variety and control of form and tone."

Unfortunately, such an approach suggests the strait-jacket. It denies variety to Anand's work, it suggests a writer of limited attainments, it forces a critic into defensive and farfetched analysis (as it does Marlene Fisher in her interpretation of "The Cobbler and the Machine.")

A critic can go to the other extreme, become oblivious of an overall pattern and seek 'insights into the nature of human experience' by analyzing a few, usually the better-known stories. Such an approach throws up a fragmented view.

Of course, one can become so obsessed with the over-all pattern that one can choose to study the short stories in the context of Anand's entire work, particularly his novels. Such an approach would be comparative rather than analytical. The emphasis would then be on, the themes, motifs, characterisation, language, and other features common between the various forms Anand has chosen to practise.

Related to such an approach is the one which seeks to trace Anand's development as a short story writer by studying his stories in chronological order. One may notice that, superficially, Anand's work leads from stark naturalism to ironical and symbolical presentation. Superficially, because in Anand's case there can be no water-tight compartments. One cannot state with archaeological precision when realism ended and symbolism began, because the one has not ended and the other is always present. Indeed, the characteristics of Anand the short story writer are the same, but for heightened compassion, in his first collection as in his last collection.

In Anand there is also the danger of missing the wood for the trees and concentrating on a prominent feature of his short stories. One such feature is the picture of contemporary society, social concern, realistic portrayal of social inequities, call it what you will. Such an approach may be summed up in the words of a young scholar: "The themes and subjects of Anand are thus mainly aimed at depicting the contemporary social situation, being a victim of effects, traditions and cruel customs, a corrupt social order or a heartless administration. Portraying graphically the hapless individual in his pitiful and helpless predicament, Anand aims at touching the humanist chords of the reader's heart with a message perhaps that only a concerted effort can overhaul the none-too happy present social situation."'

One may, as M.K. Naik does, divide Anand's stories on the basis of theme: (1) stories about the traditional way of life: (a) those which bring out Its limitations; (b) those its strengths; (2) stories which show up the age-old political and social attitudes; (3) those which deal with the modernity theme: (a) the impact of modernity on the traditional way of life, (b) the relationship between the colonial Indian and the White man, (c) the Indian response to post-independence events; (4) stories which highlight the position of women in traditional Hindu society; (5) those which bring out the exploitation of the poor and the oppressed; (6) stories which display a lyric awareness and a poetic spirit! Such an approach is useful but for the fact that it leads to considerable overlapping. How, for instance, is one to decide how to classify a story about a poor peasant exploited by a blind tradition, in (1) or (5)?

The extent of overlapping is reduced if one makes the basic mood of a story the decisive factor. The basic mood often highlights the part of technique in a story, and thus facilitates the study of the elements of the story. Theme then becomes as import as characterisation and the form of the story demands as much attention as the methods of narration. The danger of such an approach is that criticism can become academic and the critic a pedant. Were such criteria to be applied to Anand's stories, the categories would approximate to this division: farces, satires, symbolical stories, humorous stories, stories of mood and atmosphere, allegories, fables and, where authorial slanting is apparently absent, "objective" stories.

It is difficult to lay down which approach is the best for Anand's stories because he does not practise one form of the story but many, ranging from the sketch to the plotted tales; because characterisation is achieved by a variety of means; because greater skill is on display in the shorter form; because the stories deal with more subjects than the novels; because Anand's backgrounds are as varied as the individuals who come alive in his hands. All that one can say with any degree of finality is that each story suggests its own criteria.

10

Coolie: Breaking away from Tradition

The-thirties movement proved to be a watershed in the literary sensibility in Europe. It shook the writers from age-old slumber and awakened them to the realisation of new possibilities, which had so far eluded them. The early fiction of Anand was truly representative of the movement. His-fictional world depicted not the feudal splendours and mysticism of traditional Indian literature, but the hard and suffering lives of the millions of his countrymen. Anand deserves credit for establishing the novel as a favoured medium for Indo-English writers and for deflecting the literature from a worn-out romantic poetizing into the more vigorous forms of realistic prose-fiction.

In the choice of themes, therefore, Anand is unquestionably an innovator, He is the first novelist writing in English to choose as his raw material the lower-class life of the Indian masses. In Untouchable and Coolie, he almost dreads the flight of imagination, feels shy of soaring high and keeps close to the ground with a vengeance. He does not hesitate to turn the floodlight on the darkest spots in Indian life.

"Among the Indo-English novelists," observes Anniah Gowda, "Mulk Raj Anand is the most conspicuously committed writer .... Perhaps the best word for it is the plainest: it is propaganda writing." The propaganda novel in the true sense is one so dominated by its author's ulterior purpose that the propaganda cannot be ignored, and normally one who dislikes that line of propaganda would find the book unreadable. Such a novel, Gowda opines, cannot rank among the great works of literature. In a similar vein, Chetan Karnani complains of the extra-literary intentions of the novelist: "The trouble with Anand is that he is not able to hide his proletarian sympathies." These 'determined' detractors of Anand, and some others, charge him of having used the artistic medium of the novel for pure propaganda; indoctrination, they hold, does not go with the creative process and aesthetic experience.

Anand is not deterred by such criticism: "I do not in the least mind Criticism, even adverse, probably because the suffering from which my novels have been written has already been rewarded by the fact that they have gone into so many languages of the world in spite of their truthfulness and exposure of the many shams, hypocrisies and orthodoxies of India." This is true, for in his fiction Anand was heeding his artistic conscience than following any pre-conceived formula. And that accounts for the abiding appeal of his novels. What is merely purposive inside a coterie and sensational with the transient turmoils which it depicts cannot hope to endure unless it holds a core of eternal universal truth.

In this respect Coolie, published some sixty years ago, is perhaps the best of Anand's novels; it is contemporary, naturalistic, topical and in harmony with the prevailing English literary mood. No wonder, then, that it obtained an extensive readership in several countries and was acclaimed as one of the best-known socially-realistic novels of the nineteen-thirties. It demonstrates an early tendency in Anand to present life in terms of proletarian experience. "As a total novel of human experience," writes Anand, "Coolie does not need special pleading. It sweeps the reader along on the curve of its essential force ... as well as its fundamentalism."

Anand vigorously affirms his position as a social realist: "I am not in the least frightened of the charges of propaganda... The novel (Coolie) is integral. It has a life quality about it, almost as if the pages got fire from the frame of the tragic hero.'" Taking a strong dig at the Indian critics, he observes: "nobody in the many languages into which Coolie h s gone has suggested that it is propaganda, except some Indian critics who ... regard contemporary themes, especially from the lower depths, as extra-literary material .... And oddly enough, they take refuge behind the categories of Western academic criticism and dismiss anything about raw life as 'naturalism' or 'realism' or 'social realism.' They will accept Tolstoy and Dickens and Hardy, but should an Indian try to portray the peasants of India, or slum children, or the maid servants, you are written off as a 'communist propagandist'."

Coolie, as also other" early writings of Anand, cannot be fully appreciated unless studied in relation to the movement of the nineteenthirties in Western Europe. For as a writer he was shaped in the thirties when several problems were more important than the individual; the problem, then, that Anand "tried to face as a writer was not strictly a private, but a private-public problem." As it was, he found it impossible to maintain aloofness from politics in the post-World War Europe.

Anand stayed in London forover two decades, from 1924 to 1945; he was therefore deeply influenced by the Progressive Movement in literature that flourished in the thirties. In London, Anand came under numerous literary, political and social influences and it is in them that the sources of his synthesis of Marxist and humanist thought can be seen. "You will find that amorphous as my books are," writes Anand, "I did stick to the novel form, more or less, as an imaginative interpretation of Indian life rather than use it as a vehicle to sermonise. And the posing of the problems of human beings in the 30s by people like Malraux, Celine and Hemingway gave the necessary sense of discrimination to my own treatment of the predicament of our people as against the European view." He was an overt nationalist and championed the socialist cause in his fiction in common with many European and American writers of the day.

The peculiar conditions during the early decades of the century in Europe and elsewhere put a great pressure on the writers to sympathise with the socialist cause. The complacency following the First World War, based on the erroneous belief that the League of Nations was going to preserve peace and security, was suddenly exploded, leaving a feeling of loss and disenchantment. There was a complete erosion of human values.

Another event that had a profound influence on writers like Anand was the general strike of 1926 in Great Britain. It made them conscious of the class war between haves and have-nots in modem civilisation. On his arrival in England, Anand had admired Britain for its achievements in science and technology. Living through the strike, this illusion of his was shattered with a bang.

He increasingly came to realise that the scientific and technological discoveries if controlled by a select band of people need not result in social benefits. "And it was no use speculating on the beneficence of science," avers Anand, "if its discoveries were to be manipulated to their own advantage by a small group of individuals who controlled the key industries and had an absolute say in matters of domestic and foreign policy."

The object of the General Strike was to attain specific rights for the mine workers; in a way it was a proletarian challenge to the government and its capitalist bias. Anand and a group of his colleagues sided with the workers; they felt dismayed at the failure of the strike. The strike had revealed the reactionary character of the English State "that it could put back human progress for a thousand years." Anand felt convinced' 'that the people of Britain, no less than the people of India, had yet to win their liberty.'

After the destruction wrought by the First World War, European society had plunged anew into the shadows of economic depression and cynical mood. The economic depression caused disastrous effects; it gave rise to unemployment that brought in its fold unending distress and appalling misery.

The rise of Fascism in Italy under Mussolini and the Nazi power in Germany in 1933 under Hitler reflected the paralysis of the Western democracies. The Japanese aggression on Manchuria in 1931, the Italian rape of Ethiopia in 1935, the extinction of Spanish Republic at the hands of Germany and Italy in 1936-37, all in succession tolled the death knell of the League of Nations.

Such a disintegrating world disillusioned the intellectual of the day; he strove for a commitment that would restore order and save his world from the existing chaos. The writer was not only absorbing the atmosphere as a participant but also seemed readily inclined to reflect it in his writing.

Alarmed at the situation, the intellectuals of the West prominently led by Maxim Gorky of Russia, Romain Rolland of France, Thomas Mann of Germany, and E.M. Forster of England assembled in Paris in 1935. They raised the voice of liberty as Shelley and Dickens had done in their own times. "I want greater freedom for writers," declared Forster, "both as creators and critics for the ... maintenance of culture." He appealed to the writers to be courageous and sensitive to fulfil their 'public calling'; he urged them to come forward and arouse the people to act and struggle for creating a just and humane society. The conference was dominated by the writers possessing socialist background, or having some affiliations with communism. They posed a premonition of a threatening situation, caused by the aggressive imperialism of the day. The psychology working in the background was the moving force that impelled the writers to use their talents against fascism and write for the working classes.

Inspired by these ideas some Indian students studying in England assembled in London a few months after the Paris Conference and formed Progressive Writers Association. Their meetings were attended and occasionally addressed by Ralph Fox, Karnford and Caudwell. They framed a manifesto of the Association which was finalised, amongst others, by Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer.

The progressive writers believed that the principal function of literature was to reflect and express the aspirations and fundamental problems of the toiling masses and ultimately help in the formation of socialist society. Even those who were not Marxists adhered to the idea of a basic social transformation and political independence. A new content is discerned in literature which not only bears out a radically revolutionary character but also a basically new rationale for such a change. "That truth alone should matter to a writer," says Anand in his essay "Why I Write?," "that this truth should become imaginative truth without losing sincerity. The novel should interpret the truth of life, from felt experience and not from books."

The Progressive Movement then was a reaction against the esoteric and inward-looking art of the nineteen-twenties. In England, it began with the publication of Michael Robert's anthologies, New Signatures and New Country which grouped Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, Isherwood and Edward Upward together for the first time. These writers were responsible for making social realism and tendentious literature of revolt fashionable in both Europe and America. It was during the same time that Anand was working on his novel Coolie.

He essentially shared the political and social philosophy of the left wing intellectuals: "there was ample confirmation in the thinking aloud of the younger writers like Aragon, Malraux, Auden, Spender, Day Lewis and others that the questions they were asking themselves were more or less similar to ours in India, and, irrespective of race and colour, we shared similar concepts and aspired towards kindred objects." Left Review an important organ of the new writers, carried extracts from the then unpublished Coolie.

The particular conditions of the thirties account for many close resemblances between Anand and George Orwell; both had much in common: a passionate sense of social injustice, "a recognition, more than a recognition, indeed knowledge of the innumerable frustrations and suppressions. Both men hated the social prejudices that helped to maintain the oppressive status quo; the class system in England, the caste system in India." Moreover, both the writers shared a profound dislike of colonialism. Orwell and Anand both proved their readiness to the Civil War in Spain. In tone and temper, Orwell's Road to Wigan Pier carries the same burden as Anand's Coolie.

One of the notable consequences of this movement was a growing rejection of the aesthetic theory of "art for art's sake." Anand has felt, from the very initial stages of his awareness of the human predicament, that the writer cannot shut himself in an ivory tower; he cannot stand on a high perch, but has to go into the raging storm itself, to be with the people to ally himself with their many sorrows and little joys. The purpose of the novel, according to Anand, is to change mankind, and through mankind society. He is vehemently opposed to the formalists or aesthetes who hold that art, though influenced by life, is essentially governed by its inner logic and not by outside forces. Nor has he any sympathy with the writers who are self-centred subjectivists indulging merely in petty variations of Proustian aestheticism.

The thirties movement defined in specific terms the position of the artist and the functions of his art. In Apology for Heroism. Anand places the writer on a very high pedestal, glorifying him as "precisely the man who can encompass the whole of life.'' He is superior to the moralist, the scientist and the politician, each of whom takes a limited view of man, while the writer is uniquely fitted to aspire to be a whole man, to attain, as far as possible, a more balanced perspective of life. A novelist like any other artist is concerned chiefly with the truth. And he reveals it not like the philosopher who does it in a cold statement of dogma but only in terms of life, rendered through the devices of dramatisation.

Anand, like Lawrence, Gorky, and Eric Gill, believes that the work of a genuine creative writer is inspired by a mission. He seems to be in full agreement with Arnold's dictum that literature at bottom is the criticism of life. He is strongly committed to his creed, and in his opinion "any writer who said that he was not interested in a condition humane was either posing or yielding to a fanatical love of isolationism, a perverse and clever defence of the adolescent desire to be different."

Coolie is a proletarian novel as it focuses on the predicament of the underprivileged; it narrates the miserable life of a labourer or a coolie. The satire is directed against the iniquitous injustice of Indian society which treats servants as servile creatures and outcastes. More than that, it brings into sharp focus the capitalist domipation and the role of money as a key factor in all spheres of life. This is what Munoo, the central character of Coolie, learns in his short life.

Anand has always felt that the less privileged populations in a country like India have been deliberately kept at a level of sub-humanity. In Apology for Heroism, he bemoans the plight of the coolies. "It never seemed to have entered the heads of our masters," says Anand, "to give the coolies the slightest chance of bettering themselves. They were supposed to be sub-human they worked from dawn to dusk, old and young, male and female, for their masters, and they were treated like dogs."

Coolie has an epical sweep; Munoo represents specific phases of proletarian existence in specific settings. The novel is dexterously divided into five chapters, corresponding to five acts of a tragic play. The first chapter portrays Munoo, the orphan of dispossessed parents, as an innocent little boy in the rural village of Bilaspur in the Kangra hills. The second chapter deals with his tenure as a servant in the household of a bank clerk Babu Nathoo Ram in Sham Nagar. The third chapter recounts his experiences in the feudal city of Daulatpur as a worker in a small pickle factory and as a coolie fighting for work in the city market. The penultimate chapter describes his life as a labourer in Bombay at the British-owned Sir George White Cotton Mills. The last chapter shows him as a servant and rickshaw coolie in the employ of a promiscuous Eurasian, Mrs. Mainwaring, in Simla. In drifting from job to job, from his native hills to the cities of the plains, we get a most vivid panorama of life in India of that period.

Munoo's beginning is typical of the underprivileged class. His father had died a slow death of bitterness and disappointment because he could not pay the interest due to his landlord on the money he had borrowed from him. Munoo could never forget the utter helplessness and tragic destiny of his mother consequent to the death of her husband. Despite the sad memories and the ill-treatment meted out to him by his aunt and uncle, Munoo is happy and contented. Before Munoo leaves his idyllic surroundings in search of earning a livelihood, he is a sensitive and intelligent boy full of animal spirits:

> Munoo was a genius at climbing trees. He would hop on to the trunk like a monkey, climb the bigger branches on all fours, swing himself to the thinner offshoots as if he were dancing on a trapese, and then, diving dangerously into space, he would jump from one tree to another.

So, in spite of the fact that his aunt maltreated him and "beat him more than he beat his cattle," he really did not want to go to the town.

Leaving his hills in North-West India, Munoo descends to the plains and becomes a servant in the house of Babu Nathoo Ram, a sub-accountant. The village boy's delight at having come to a colourful city soon vanishes. Bibiji makes his life a hell; she is always ready to hurl filthiest abuses on the innocent boy. He is a mere servant; he has no right to play with other children. He undergoes a dreadful routine of domestic servility; he is made to drudge along from early morning till late in the evening. Once he bursts out weeping before his uncle, complaining about the hard, bitter life he has had since he arrived. Daya Ram silences him by reminding him that he is their servant and so he must not mind what they say.

Munoo frequently thinks over his sad plight and tries to find out the reason of his sufferings:

> 'What am I-Munoo?' he asked himself as he lay wrapped in his blanket, early one morning. 'I am Munoo, Babu Nathoo Ram's servant,' the answer came to his mind.

Munoo does not search for causes and effects. It does not occur to him to ask himself why he is a servant and Babu Nathoo Ram a master. Thoroughly convinced of his inferiority, he accepts his position as a slave and tries to instil into his own mind the notion of his brutishness that his mistress has so often nagged him about. And he promises himself that he would be a good servant, a perfect model of a servant Munoo's miserable life at the eternally nagging Bibiji's house often makes him contemplate his position in the world. He realises that money indeed is everything; and his suffering is due to his poverty. Eventually he draws the conclusion: "there must only be two kinds of people in the world: the rich and the poor."

Munoo rebels and runs away from the place ending up m a town called Daulatpur. There he is employed in a pickle factory by the kindly Prabha Dyal and his unscrupulous partner Ganpat. Munoo's lovable nature endears him to Prabha and to Prabha's wife, Parvati. The personal care he receives from them is highly soothing to him. However, very often he feels dismayed and the only thing that "relieved these fits of depression was the silent comradeship which existed between him and the other coolies."

Munoo has to work very hard in the dark suffocating atmosphere in the primitive factory. It is a wretched place where the labourers "worked from day to day in the dark underworld, full of intense heat of blazing furnaces and the dense malodorous smells .... They worked long hours, from dawn to past midnight, so mechanically that they never noticed the movements of their own or each other's hands." Munoo, the tender boy, leads an infernal life. Things become worse when he is rendered jobless since the factory has closed down because of Ganpat's forgery and treachery in business.

Munoo's sojourn in Bombay as a factory worker provides Anand with an opportunity to describe the pathetic conditions of the workers and their plight in society. A fortuitous meeting with Hari gets Munoo employment, a large British-owned Cotton Mill. Bombay, far from being the land of his heart's desire, proves nightmarish. He is totally disappointed; the poverty and suffering in the city streets appall him. He comes to realise the truth of the statement: "The bigger a city is, the more cruel it is to the sons of Adam .... You have to pay even for the breath you breathe:" The small and dingy room in which Munoo puts up with eight of his colleagues is nothing short of a living hell.

The Cotton Mills where Munoo comes to work are intended to expose the exploitation of the Indian proletariat by the British imperialist. Munoo here finds himself one of the herd of anonymous workers, cheated and victimised by the English masters. Anand's political alignment with the workers is evidenced as he delineates the harsh lives of the workers and their families, the squalor of the Bombay slums and their exploitation by the money lenders. The labourers, including wives and children, have long working hours, the wages they get are quite inadequate. The workers are denied even the bare amenities: "There was nowhere for the coolies working in the factory to wash, except at a pump in the grounds .... There was nowhere to go for a meal ... only a man with two baskets of plain roasted gram and cheap sugar-coated stuff sat outside the factory."

Anand gives a direct and detailed presentation of the socialist programme, which reads like the manifesto of the Progressive Writers' Association of the' thirties. Addressing the coolies of the Sirjabite Factory, Sauda, a trade union leader, exhorts them to go on strike in their fight against the employers:

> "We are human beings and not soulless machines."
>
> "We want the right to work without having to pay bribes." "We want clean houses to live in."
>
> "We want schools for our children and creches for our babies." "We want to be skilled workers."
>
> "We want to be saved from the clutches of the money lenders."
>
> "We want a good wage and no more subsistence allowance if we must go on short work."
>
> "We want shorter hours."
>
> "We want security so that the foreman cannot dismiss us suddenly."
>
> "We want our organisations to be recognised by law."

Specific settings such as these are used to provoke anger and moral indignation. As a writer of thirties, Anand's avowed purpose is to treat literature as a social evidence or testimony rather than the literary problem of what happens to the novel when it is subjected to the pressures of politics or political ideology.

The friction between the millowners and the workers has serious repercussions. The strike that erupts from intolerable conditions turns into Hindu-Muslim riots. Bewildered and shocked, Munoo flees from the scene. Before he could jump aside, he is knocked down by the car of Mrs. Mainwaring, a coquettish Anglo-Indian lady. She takes him to Simla and employs him as her personal servant. Munoo moves from place to place with this lecherous lady given to flirting with several men. He has grown into a handsome young fellow and she makes him her rickshaw-puller and lover. This chapter reveals Anand at his bitterest. Munoo, the coolie, is made to carry another human being, a woman at that; and what a woman, "a bitch to all the dogs that prowled round her bungalow." This toilsome work tells severely on Munoo's health and he dies of consumption. His death at the age of sixteen is intended to focus attention on the injustices of society and ills of the economic system.

The novel is a remarkable study of the relation between literature and ideas. In order to make some explicit statements for the cause of the proletariat, Anand chooses to end the novel with a message. For the purpose, he introduces an alter-ego figure, the "learned" coolie Mohan. He is "a didactic device" intended, to announce the declared "thesis" of the novel; the evil of a capitalistic social system.

The revolutionary character of his moralizing is revealed when Mohan tells a coolie who has mortgaged his land: "Then come with me, and we shall kill the landlord one day, and get your land." He makes an impassioned appeal for a cooperative system: "It is my object to make you people realise that if you work, you should have a share in the things that you produce with the sweat of your brow." The coolies fail to understand him. "You will let them kill you," bursts our

Mohan, "you are all ignorant slaves. How can I drill any sense into your heads." The efforts of Mohan will not go in vain: for, in the recreation of the coolie and his despicable existence Anand has stirred up the human in every reader.

Anand's critique of the Indian society in the novel follows recognizably socialist thought, though socialism is strongly blended with humanitarian seal. His preoccupation with contemporary issues and his faith in humanistic ideals are best reflected in the course of the narrative. Coolie not only reveals Anand at his best but also provides ample material for examining his treatment of artistic problems facing the Indo-English novelist in the nineteen-thirties. It seeks to present a vivid panorama of life in India; it is propagandist in the sense that any frank statement of facts is bound to appeal for their correctness. In the final count, we must admire Anand's imaginative skill in integrating his sources, and transcending them to produce an intensely realised and credible narrative that is both political thesis and absorbing fiction.

The novelist in the present day cannot abstract himself from the contemporary world; nor can he absolve himself of the role of the seer, one who sees truth and the inner harmony on which the things of life are strung together. He, like Anand, is the Ancient Mariner, and the world the Wedding Guest.

11

Coolie: Critics Point of View

EDGELL RICKWORD

John Edgell Rickword, MC (22 October 1898 - 15 March 1982) was an English poet, critic, journalist and literary editor. He became one of the leading communist intellectuals active in the 1930s. He then took up literary work in London. He reviewed for the Times Literary Supplement, which led to his celebrated review of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land. J. C. Squire published him in the London Mercury, and Desmond MacCarthy as literary editor of the New Statesman gave him work.

He started the Calendar of Modern Letters literary review, now highly regarded, in March 1925. It lasted until July 1927, assisted by Douglas Garman and then Bertram Higgins, and contributions from his cousin C. H. Rickword. The Scrutinies books of collected pieces from it were a succes d'estime; the purpose of the publication was a mass killing of the sacred cows of Edwardian literature (G. K. Chesterton, John Galsworthy, John Masefield, George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells). Its undoubted influence as a precursor of later criticism was very marked in the early days of Scrutiny, the magazine founded a few years later by F. R. Leavis and Q. D. Leavis. Rickword also wrote for that publication.

Many years ago a novel was published by an Indian writer which had the distinction of carrying a preface by E.M. Forster, the most sensitive English interpreter of Indian life.

In his preface to Untouchable, Forster selected for special praise the characterisation of Bakha, a sweeper, who, he said, "is a real individual, lovable, thwarted, sometimes grand, sometimes weak, and thoroughly Indian." That is the point which makes Anand's novel a landmark. For the first time in English literature, an Indian, one of the most suppressed of all, takes the centre of the stage in his own right, as a human being, and not merely in some relation to foreigners.

With Coolie, Anand's second novel, we are plunged into a much more complicated world, a world where apparently everyone is free to move about and earn his living at whatever trade or craft he pleases, but which actually imposes an even more rigid discipline than the old. For the untouchable may be chided or kicked, if he offends the laws of caste, but he has his place in the system, he is necessary; but the coolie in a Bombay cotton mill, underpaid and overworkea, cheated by foreman and storekeeper, always in debt and fearful of the sack, is not necessary to anyone-there are too many waiting to take his place. That is what Munoo, the central character of Coolie, learns in his short life. And in his drifting from job to job, from his native hills to the cities of the plain, we get a most vivid panorama of life in India today.

It is Anand's understanding of the inner processes of human life, which gives his books such perspective, such a rich background. E.M. Forster, sympathetic as he is to Indians, really ends by giving up the attempt to understand them, accepts them as mysteriously different from Europeans. He does not see in the decay and transformation of their social structure the explanation of their psychological traits.

Besides the basic fact of his being a gifted novelist, certain circumstances in Anand's life have given him the opportunity of enriching his sensitiveness and understanding. His knowledge of India's immensely varied life was gained in his travels from military station to station with his father who had gained a commission in the Indian Army. And his mother was a peasant woman from the Central Punjab, so that he was brought up on the highly imaginative songs and heroic sagas which form the traditional literature of her people. And, then, winning a scholarship, he came to London and Cambridge and studied intensively the leading thinkers of the west. During his mature life he has travelled incessantly in search of himself and others-lately in the work for world peace. Coolie was recognised by English critics as a fine achievement judged by the highest standards.

The importance of this cannot be overestimated, for the English-speaking people have far too long no choice but to listen to Anglo-Indian vulgarity or to fake Mother-Indian mysticism. But Anand is a writer, who, whilst tremendously receptive to the wisdom and beauty which is his people's inheritance, yet understands the role of western technique in freeing them from the poverty and illiteracy which is their lot. It is not simply a liking for artistic irony which causes him to close Untouchable with Bakha's dream of the wonderful machine, the water-closet, which would free him forever from his sordid task; not that Munoo, of Coolie, should die of haemorrhage of the lungs through pulling rickshaws up-hill in this age of motor-cars. He does not choose the road back to the spinning-wheel, but sees in the machine, properly controlled by men, the prime benefactor of mankind.

Nevertheless, Anand is not an "intellectual" novelist in the same sense that Shaw is an intellectual playwright. Anand's work is much richer, more human, than an analysis of the ideas can convey. It is his understanding of the way society works, derived from his study of the classic European thinkers, which gives the framework to his novel a vital form, for what is essentially a poetic view of life.

HILLA VAKEEL

The reality of the dung-hill is lessened by a careful counting of the files buzzing over the top. "Torn and tattered raiment" seems less pitiful when the tents are consciously exposed; and hunger loses, as it were, its significance when luridly spot lit for well-fed audiences. For poverty, to the poor, is a matter of the everyday life. In it they live and breathe and die, unconscious for the most part of the unjust social order which has led to their victimisation and not too acutely mindful of the sordidness of their surroundings. Dickens removed this aura of unreality from the propagandist novel, by investing his characters with so many absurdly ludicrous traits that one was immediately made aware of their essential humanity.

The great 'Russian novelists underscored the terrors of the personal drama, of that haunted territory in which we, poor and rich alike, lose the battle of life because we are not great enough for all the things we want to be. The tragedy was always isolated from the surrounding in order that the G.C.M of human experience could be suitably manifested.

In Coolie, which is one of the masterpieces in this genre, it is the author's peculiar sense of what one might term "the humanness of human beings" divorced from the accidents of their environment, and an ability, which amounts; to genius, to express its nuances in terms of human speech, which completely discolours didactic trends. The story concerns itself with incidents in the life of Munoo, a tough and bright little peasant lad who comes down from the hills to seek his fortune in the city.

Circumstances compel him to make this decision, but he has a nostalgia for the hills where "some fruit or other was always in season to gladden a little boy's heart ... Ripe yellow mangoes dropped by dosens in the spring, and could easily be hidden in the grass and the hay. Purple and red jamuns and long green mulberries fell in sickly profusion during the summer and could be stored on long banana leaves. In the winter the stealing of stick-like sugarcane aroused no suspicion in the gardener who browsed lazily in his siesta.... And then there was the cool breese which soothed the fatigue of the body and relieved the natural heat, the slow breese that was rising even as he sat there now, stirring the acacia trees while the cicadas rasped in the thickets, the frogs croaked in the shallows and the swamps, the birds sang, the butterflies flitted over the wild flowers and the insects buzsed over the pollen in honey.... The blood of little Munoo ran to the tune of all this lavish beauty. And he would rather have had all the machines (from the city) come here than tear himself away from the sandy margins of the backwaters where he played."

Daya Ram, Munoo's uncle, who is a chaprasi in the imperial Bank of India, finds the boy a job as a servant in the house of a Bengalee clerk working in the bank. Life with "Bibijee," in whom motherhood has not destroyed the most unpleasant elements of a vitriolic femininity, is far from pleasant and the boy runs away from the family, so that he can no longer stand the ill-treatment meted out to him. Anand has a most uncanny gift for evoking vivid and significant details and projecting them to form brilliant, life-like images of human beings.

He has a most acceptable flair for making his minor, as well as his major, characters come to life in a manner which only Life-and the highest art can achieve and equal. Bibijee the pestilentially ill-tempered housewife, Babuji her weak and frustrated husband living on desolating planes of mediocrity, the "chhota Babu" jolly and human and benevolent, and Mr. England, the small town English bank assistant, who is the Babuji's immediate superior, form part of an extremely varied and interesting portrait-gallery.

The chronicle of Munno's life proceeds to reveal him always as the harassed underdog, the victim of forces against which he is powerless to fight, and which he can neither control nor accept. As a worker in a pickle factory, as a coolie at a railway station, as a labourer in a cotton mill in Bombay, Munoo is ceaselessly, unfailingly tripped up by Destiny. Such is the force and brilliance of Anand's writing that one does not stop to question the pattern of life which the author imposes on his hero. It has an inevitability which belongs to that scheme of things within which we all live, and love and struggle and die. Like all great novelists, Anand has the faculty of investing unusual incidents with a bright and convincing naturalness and reality. He rides athwart the world, subtly, nimbly, effortlessly duplicating Providence, creating worlds, dissipating complexities, energizing the disinherited of his special universe into conflict with life and death.

Munoo dies of consumption, mentally and physically "spent and broken" after working as a rickshaw coolie in Simla, for his life as a coolie in the cotton mills of Bombay has been lived on the edge of starvation. Sleeping in city streets, living in slums, among people whose lives hover perpetually on the brink of tragedy, facing the ghastly and sordid bitterness of insecurity, the brave young spirit dims, and flickers, and dies.

It is one of the surest proofs of the author's brilliance and sensibility, his power of evoking moods, both grave and gay, that one leaves the book conscious only of the overpowering tragedy which has overtaken the hero (or is he a hero!). Anand writes forcefully and with ease. In Coolie he has produced a novel which puts him to a front rank of the in tensest and most distinguished writers of our time.

EDWARD BURRA

Untouchable showed the gradual breaking-up of the caste system. Coolie continues this with an account of the system which is laking its place, of class based on money. The story opens with a brief idyl that introduces the peasant boy Munoo watching the cattle by the side of his home river. From here he is uprooted-the changes of tempo in the prose here and elsewhere are of the highest art and the adventures of his short tragic life follow in four major episodes, first as a servant in the house of a bank clerk, next working in a primitive pickle factory in feudal city, then as one of the proletariat of the cotton industry in Bombay, and finally as the servant of a half-caste woman at Simla. Each of these episodes is in itself a study of conditions as complete as Untouchable.

They are linked together by a series of typically picaresque accidents. The whole is a terrible vivid panorama which is propagandist only in the sense that any frank statement of such facts is bound to appeal for their correction. How that is to be done is another matter. Anand at least leaves little doubt that the Indians cannot help themselves. They appear here as thoughtless and as cruel to one another as birds that turn on a wounded member of the flock and destroy it. The English occur only as minor characters, and are described mostly with an inclination to caricature, in fact precisely as they must appear to Indian eyes.

It would have been false to Anand's purpose to describe them otherwise. But there is no special distinction drawn between the races. If the Bombay magnate looks exaggerated, what about Lady Todar Mal? A fantastic creature, yet she rings absolutely true.

However brilliantly the general picture had been painted it would have been no more than a picture but for the character of the boy Munoo. He is essentially the same person as Bakha, the untouchable, differing only in physical appearance and incidentally Anand has a special genius for describing the outsides of people and things. There is no more to Munoo than to Bakha nothing but irrepressible curiosity and happiness.

The shadows of joy and desire, and the simplicity of his mind in the face of ever increasing suffering are magnificently done. He is incapable of dramatizing experience: so that in his sudden questions. "Why are some men so good, and others bad" there is an indescribable power. Yet he is no tragic hero; nothing nameable is wasted when he dies, nothing but his own love of life. But such is the force of the author's pity that all that is good in life seems to be irreparably lost with him.

Munoo is a universal kind of figure. His is the passion not only of India but of mankind. It is hard to bring oneself back from him to books where the special individual is of all importance.

12

Coolie and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: Epitome of Social Justice

Achebe resembles Anand in some of his characteristics as a writer. He too is a committed artist with a missionary seal for the restoration of dignity to his people. Achebe is a consummate artist. His craftsmanship is nowhere in jeopardy. Without sacrificing his overall aim of evoking the splendid past and the harmonious but simple life-style of his ancestors, he has succeeded in creating credible characters, substantive stories and enthralling and absorbing plots.

While Anand doesn't conceal his sensibilities and political posturing on occasions, Achebe merely shows up the contradiction and chaos thrown up by the colonial regime and leaves it to the reader to make his own judgement or inference.

Where Achebe wants to indict the arrogance and imperialism of the British, he takes recourse to the ironic or satiric mode, Thus we notice that there are similarities and variances between Anand and Achebe as writers and artists. Nevertheless what interests one here is the possibility of an in-depth analysis of the novels of Anand and Achebe with a view of establishing their liberationist angle and scope for libterationist interpretation and illustration.

Both the writers are by their own confession committed to the people they write about. They are committed to the emergence of a new society free from external intrusion, domination, exploitation, social and political marginalisation. They envision an egalitarian social system and a new economic order. Obsession with social justice and liberation is the hallmark of both Anand and Achebe. Anand is a novelist of the "underdog" in India and Achebe is a crusader for an enlightened, free, self-sufficient and self-governing Africa. Both have written a lot about fiction-writing and about their own novels-their vision, purpose and theories.

The idea of justice has been developed and deepened down the centuries by different world religions, philosophers, political thinkers and theoreticians. Aristotle was however the first to introduce the concept of legal justice (an integral or general justice embracing all the virtues) and that of particular justice (equity in attribution of ownership to individuals). In both the cases justice involves a relationship to others in the first to the common good, in the second to the good of an individual.

The Aristotelian concept of legal justice is completely secularised and purely political. Scholasticism, however, goes beyond mere observance of positive law of the state to become once more a comprehensive justice under the sign of religion. The idea of justice as propounded by Scholasticism based on the Bible and other religions seems to be rooted in the basic belief that man does not belong to himself but to God. Hence, all virtue is giving God his due. But as God is Father, his love binds us in solidarity. It is therefore a duty injustice to work for the common good and specially towards the neighbour in his needs and not to use one's goods as if they were absolutely and exclusively one's own.

St. Thomas Aquinas sums this up by saying that justice is always fidelity in giving to another what is his due. There is an intrinsic and almost inseparable relationship between love and justice. The various kinds of justice viz., the commutative (relationship between individuals among themselves), the distributive (the relationship of the society with regard to the members) and social justice (the relationship of the common good of all for itself) are aspects of one fundamental demand which takes on various forms in concrete relationships. Paul VI defined social justice, in his epochal encyclical Populorum Progression (1967) as the "integral development of every man and of all men."

Thus the approach to justice in today's context is broad-based and global, governing relationships between not only individuals, but between groups, races, classes, castes, nations and even continents. Social disparities and disabilities of all kinds, economic inequalities and other exploitations and injustices are all issues affecting the entire human community and therefore it is the responsibility of one and all to search for solutions.

While the liberation perspective emerges from the agonies and aspirations of the poorest of the poor, the underlying vision is of a God of the Bible who consistently takes the side of the enslaved Israelites against their oppressors and of Jesus who proclaims "Good news to the poor" and promises liberation and freedom to those living in bondage. The shift was from renewal to liberation deemed adequate to express the new perception and vision. Gustavo Gutierrez, the foremost liberation theologian from Peru, sums up God's intervention and action in the history of the Israelites in the following words:

> God's might is at the service of justice. His power is expressed in the defence of the rights of the poor. The real theophany or revelation of God, is in the liberation of the person who is poor.

Thus it becomes clear that the concept of liberation while involving confrontation, struggle and even subversion in the context of unjust and oppressive social structures, militates against any mechanistic, materialistic, atheistic or fatalistic approach to the human situation or for that matter the whole of reality. It affirms the power of the poor in history to bring about more humane and fraternal changes by generating a liberating social praxis.

Anand is a prolific writer and has written a large number of novels and short stories. The problems that generally engage him in his novels are the exploitation of the poor, social discrimination based on caste and sex, the impact of industrialisation, colonialism, race relations etc. Anand probes the lives of the people of lower castes, peasants, lumpens and other eccentrics thrown up during the transition from the ancient orthodox Indian society to the self-conscious modernist secular democracy.

A humanist by conviction, he strove to project the problems, conflicts and aspirations of the "underdog" in Indian society in a compassionate manner. He is moreover a searcher, a seeker with an open mind and a large heart. According to him' 'no rounded answers arc possible. Only hunches, insights, and inspirations and the knruna that may come from understanding." He conceives the task of the novelist as that of an all-comprehending "God" who understands every part of his creation, through pity, compassion or sympathy-which is the only kind of catharsis possible in art.

His humanism is not vitiated by a dogmatic or doctrinaire approach. Rather, as Shyamala A. Narayan says, "his humanism embraces all aspects of life, from contemporary slums to ancient Indian art and philosophy." Nevertheless we should reckon with the allegation of some critics that Anand has an obvious propagandist streak in his works and this violates the canons of good art. Anand perhaps unconsciously allows the humanist in him to get the better of the artist in these works. But one has to concede nonetheless that there are instances of Anand upholding the integrity of his art by allowing the situation and the characters to interact freely and evolve without his philosophy or conviction imposing itself on them or intruding into the inevitable processes. For, as a writer, he tells us, "my media was the whole of my varied experience, the theme of my work became the whole man and the whole gamut of human relationships rather than only a single part of it." And as C.D. Narasimhaiah adds, this for him meant "the introduction into creative literature, of whole new peoples who have seldom entered the realms of literature in India."

Anand was steeped in the culture, traditions and situations of his work-a-day world and these don't fail to leave their mark on the situations and characters created by him in his novels, notwithstanding his avowed leftist stance. His preoccupation with social discrimination and social justice at times mars the overall impact of a novel. It is quite significant that C.D. Narasimhaiah has called Anand's fiction, "the novel of human centrality." Margaret Berry in her study Mulk Raj Anand: the Man and the Novelist (1971) points out that Anand's concept of art passes from a relatively unimportant idealism to Revolutionary Socialism and finally into what Anand calls "comprehensive historical humanism."

In a recent book entitled, The Theme of Exploitation in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand (1990), Ambuj Kumar Sharma has made a perceptive investigation into length, breadth and depth of the theme of exploitation. He has pointed out the social and politico-economic exploitations as the two major categories with its myriad ramifications in the realms of religion, sex, colonialism, feudalism and industrial capitalism. This writer further asserts that while the Gandhian, the humanistic and the Marxian strains constitute Anand's weltanschauung, the Marxian thought forms no small part of his personality.

In other words, the class-consciousness of the principal characters of his fictional world manifests unambiguous traces of evolving into clearly defined and marked forces of collective anger and violence, bearing the seeds of liberation. It is immaterial if Anand was originally a convinced and professed Marxist who subsequently became disillusioned with Marxism. Anand operates from the broad platform of humanism and concerns himself with the lives, issues and problems of the work-a-day world of the poor and downtrodden. In other words his commitment to the dehumanizing situation of the teeming millions of our country's poor is absolutely unmistakable as one reads his novels.

We have his own words to prove beyond doubt that his literary creed as a writer and artist was of a very high order, shot through with an authentic involvement in the process of social transformation or social justice: the real test of a writer "may lie in the transformation of words into prophecy. Because what is a writer if he is not the fiery voice of the people who through his own torments, urges and exaltations, by realizing the pains, frustrations and aspirations of others and by cultivating his incipient powers of expression, transmutes in art all feeling, all thought, all experience thus becoming the seer of a new vision in any such situation."

According to G.O. Killam, Chinua Achebe is Nigeria's best known novelist and probably the best-known writer of fiction from black Africa His first novel, Things Fall Apart, was published in England in 1958. His third novel, Arrow of God (1964), shares the same traditional village background as his first one. His predominant concern in most of his novels is to portray the Igbo culture and traditions, and to underline the transformation that took place when it encountered the western civilisation and religion.

He has also written novels with a contemporary setting. Apart from No Longer at Ease (1960), his other novel, A Man of the People (1966), deals with corruption of the politicians and senior people in the present African government. In addition to novels, Achebe has also written poems, short stories and children's books. He is Africa's most prominent writer and has won many prises including the Commonwealth

Prise for Poetry. His latest novel Anthills of the Savannah has been acclaimed by critics as a masterpiece and has received all-round praise.

It is worth reproducing here what Achebe has to say about himself as a writer:

> I am a political writer. My politics is concerned with universal human communication across racial and cultural boundaries as a means of fostering respect for all people. Such respect can issue only from understanding. So my primary concern is with clearing the channels of communication in my own neighborhood by hacking away at the thickets that choke them.

These words of Achebe throw light on the vision and perspective of Achebe as a writer. Achebe sees his role as socially and politically relevant, and his background fits him perfectly into the role of social historian and social/political commentator or critic. While directly involved in his own country's history and evolution as an independent nation, he has a broad based approach to human aspirations and global human solidarity.

To quote Achebe again, "It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the high social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like the absurd man in the proverb who leaves his house to pursue a rat fleeing from the house " a telling and strident remark forcefully put, leaving absolutely no room for doubt about Achebe's credentials as a committed writer. No other author has so lucidly and powerfully presented the "African Image" to the world.

Now let us see how the concepts of social justice and liberation are exemplified or implied in the works of Anand and Achebe. I have chosen the very first novel of Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, and perhaps the popular novel of Mulk Raj Anand, Coolie.

Coolie is the story of Munoo a hill boy who by a quirk of fate is made to leave his idyllic village in the Kangra valley in search of a means of livelihood and with a naive dream of seeing a better world. The first contact with reality shatters the innocent aspiration of this orphan boy. His first employer is a minor bank clerk, a powerful caricature of an Indian subordinate driven by an inordinate desire for pleasing his colonial bosses in order to become an object of their favour. Munoo falls foul of an overbearing and ignorant housewife and finally flees her home in a bid to he free from her ill-treatment and taunts.

He next finds himself in a primitive pickle and jam factory hidden away among the reeking lanes and dark alleys of the feudal town of Daulatpur. The proprietor who has befriended him suddenly finds himself bankrupt because of his pat-mer's devious practices and is hurled back into the rank of the labourers from whence he had sought to rise. Out on the streets again, Munoo becomes a coolie facing desperate competition from other coolies for a chance to serve as a beast of burden. An elephant-driver whom he meets accidentally comes to his rescue by giving him a free ride as a stowaway in a train to Bombay.

In Bombay he seeks refuge in the family of a poor vagrant and becomes a worker in a cotton mill. His working in appalling conditions and living in most unsanitary environment are absolutely heart-rending. He is exposed to a new world of friends and foes, of cut-throat competition and treachery, of the lewd spectacle of vice and depravity of the redlight district and of the communal fires enkindled and fed by an irate factory boss to break an impending strike. Finally Munoo is knocked down by the car of an Anglo-Indian woman who takes him to Simla as her servant. Here he dies of tuberculosis which was aggravated by his having to pull the rickshaw for his mistress. The boy is only 15 years old when he succumbs to this then-much-dreaded disease brought on by under-nourishment.

Even a cursory reading of Coolie reminds us of Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo and Mark Twain who have immortalised child characters in their novels. Munoo reminds us of a David Copperfield or a Huck Finn not only because he is a victim of circumstances but also because he is a representative of a whole section of humanity in a similar plight. Munoo is not just an individual character drawn by Anand to highlight the gulf that exists between innocence and experience. While Anand artfully brings out this contrast, he nevertheless projects Munoo as a type, as a representative of a whole mass of children subjected to a range of social and psychological disadvantages and disabilities for no fault of their own. By birth Munoo belongs to the second highest in the caste hierarchy of the Indian society. Nevertheless he is beaten from pillar to post till his life ebbs away, for sheer want of nourishment. He is eager to work and earn his livelihood.

But the discriminatory and exploitive system is so brutal that he just cannot climb up higher through honest and hard work. Being a mere child he is unable to withstand the pressures of the oppressive structures and corrupt practices of the business world, supported by the political system and legitimatised by the cultural and religious values of the day. Thus Munoo represents a class of children and adolescents belonging to the poor and marginalised sections of the rural population in India. Therefore it is not caste that plays havoc in Munoo's life; his poverty, illiteracy and rural background are at the bottom of his doom. And the tragedy in the lives of the teeming millions of our rural poor consists primarily in this.

Their honest lives, hard work and sest for happy living notwithstanding, they are pushed into the bottomless pit of misery and poverty. Munoo has an irrepressible sest for enjoying life to the full. But he is pursued by an equally irresistible and inexorable "fate" that hastens him mercilessly and relentlessly to his premature death. Anand's intentions are obvious in respect of what he tried to convey in and through Munoo's vicissitudes if his frequent references to and elaborate descriptions of the sub-human existence and toil and struggle of the coolies and the labourers of Daulatpur, Bombay or Simla are any indication to go by. Anand portrays Munoo as a passive character, a pawn in the hands of fate, a hopeless victim of a complex machinery of economic, social and religious oppression.

However Anand was not a fatalist if only because we know him to have been an avowed Marxist originally. His leftist leaning is unmistakable in most of his writings. Hence one could hardly attribute fatalism to Anand.

The question now is: how can you reconcile Anand's theoretical or ideological posture with what he portrays in Coolie, especially the manner in which the young protagonist meets his end? Is it in the fitness of things to justify the tragic end of Munoo as the logical corollary of a life dogged by misery, failure, maltreatment and malnourishment? Or is it admission on the part of Anand that he is at his wilt's end to find a rational solution to the question of innocent suffering in an immoral world? C.D. Narasimhaiah observes, "In the circumstance, sheer survival must be looked upon as a triumph of the spirit, the very will to live must be reckoned as a strength." While appreciating this insight, one is provoked to ask further questions: What do expressions like "triumph of the spirit" and "will to live" imply? How is it that Munoo and his likes in India cannot lead a life of dignity no matter how much they work or strive? Aren't there positive resources of collective strength and struggle for a possible liberation in the unarticulated and mute anger that seethes through the musings of our young hero? Anger at the social injustices and inequalities is positive as it stimulates further reflection and generates new sources of people's power.

Thus the novel seems to be Anand's perspective on the question of social justice in the Indian context as verified in the life and lot of a poor hill boy. Munoo's is a microcosmic reality reflecting and signifying the larger reality of the ever-widening gap between the haves and the have-nots and the mechanisms that operate in our society in favour of the rich and the powerful and positively hostile to the marginalised and the poor. This is where one is reminded of what Marx has said in terms of a critical diagnosis of present social circumstances with a view to changing them. In his eleventh thesis of Feuerbach, Marx says:

> "The philosophers have only interpreted the world: the point is to change it." In this programme Marx also envisaged the key role played by "revolutionary praxis" (i.e. practical critical activity) informed by a relentless criticism (social analysis) of all existing conditions. Such criticism is efficacious only when it enables people to bring to consciousness the reasons why they are suffering and are alienated and what they can do to change the causes of such suffering and alienation. Anand must certainly have known these basic teachings of Marx.

Therefore it may not be farfetched to conclude that Anand was operating with some of these categories but for fear of becoming overtly "propagandist" refrained from using an ideological framework directly, or subserving his theme story or characters to a preconceived theory. In Apology for Heroism, he voices his protest to the making of the novel a mere reportage of theme and social conditions. Nevertheless in the novel there is abundant matter, in terms of story, theme, characterisation and language, for a reinterpretation on the lines of social justice and liberation. After all what did Munoo or his fellow-coolies in Daulatpur and Bombay strive for, if not for total liberation, no matter how utopian or distant a goal it might have been?

Things Fall Apart is the story of Okonkwo, a famous warrior and expert farmer who has risen from humble origins to become a wealthy and respected leader of his clan.

His entire life has been a struggle to achieve status; he has almost attained a position of pre-eminence when he accidentally kills a kinsman. He has to accept the clan's sanction for this crime by living in exile for seven years. Okonkwo and his household have to flee Umuofia before Cockcrow and settle down in Mbanta in the midst of his mother's kinsfolk. During his exile he sees the people of Mbanta allowing the first Christian missionaries to establish a church. His own son Nwoye begins to attend the Christian services and when Okonkwo tries to thrash him he leaves his father's compound and goes away to a mission school.

When Okonkwo returns at the end of the seventh year, he finds that things have changed in his home village. White missionaries have established a church and have made a number of converts. White men have also set up a court where the District Commissioner comes to judge cases according to a foreign code of law. Okonkwo tries in vain to rouse his clan to take action against these foreigners and their institutions. In a rage, he kills one of the District Commissioner's messengers. When his clan does not support his action, he commits suicide.

It is obvious from the story that Okonkwo is the central figure of the novel. Achebe has very skilfully and masterfully woven a magnificent story around the character of Okonkwo. While focusing his attention on Okonkwo, Achebe creates situations and circumstances and depicts events and celebrations that evoke the social fabric and quality of Igbo life before and after the coming of the white man. While recreating the past of the Igbo tribe Achebe is not romantic or idealistic, but realistic and therefore convincing. In other words, as C.D. Killam points out, Achebe manages to express a romantic vision of Igbo life in realistic form, to encompass aspects of that life which evoke it in all its complexity and convincingness." In this connection it is worth quoting what Achebe himself has written of the African writer's integrity.

The past needs to be recreated not only for the enlightenment of our detractors but even more for our own education, because ... the past, with all its imperfection, never lacked dignity.... This is where the writer's integrity comes in. Will he be strong enough to overcome the temptation to select only those facts that flatter him? If he succumbs he'll have branded himself as untrustworthy witness. But it is not his personal integrity as an artist which is involved. The credibility of the world he is attempting to recreate will be called to question and he'll defeat his own purpose if he is suspected of glossing over inconvenient facts.

Achebe's fictional works explore the organic connection between life and history and offer an unusually authentic and accurate picture of the fluctuating fortunes of his society and the consequent social and moral problems of his people. Achebe has unshakable faith in the power of the novel as a medium for recreating and recapturing the historical evolution of a people and for revealing and probing the consequent conflicts, crises and complexes. His novels, especially the first four, cover the entire colonial history of Africa, from the early days of European advent to the post-Independence pangs of a rebirth. His first novel, Things Fall Apart, for example, is an absorbing and artistic recreation of the traditional tribal life and the impact of the European irruption into this self sufficient and well-ordered society upsetting its primitive rhythms and harmonies.

Achebe evokes the culture and ethos of the traditional African society as typified by the Igbo tribe in Nigeria. This past for Achebe is important as he believes that the present grows out of the past and contains in itself the seeds of the future. He has a very strong sense of the past and a genuine commitment to the present situation of his people. In fact it is hi,; involvement in the current events and present socio-political situation of Independent Nigeria that compel him to present and fathom the pre-colonial past of his people. He does it faithfully, creatively and artistically in Things Fall Apart.

The title taken verbatim from Yeats's "Second Coming" is symbolic of what the author is proposing to do in his novel. The process of disintegration of an otherwise peaceful, ordered, harmonious community in Umuofia is set in motion by the arrival of the European missionaries with their institutions, customs, supercilious and condescending attitude, religion and system of education. Achebe states this overall intent of all his writings unmistakably when he says:

> I would be quite satisfied if my novels did no more teach my readers that their past with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them!

But Achebe is not a romanticist. He docs not idolise the African past but exposes the chinks in the traditional society without any reservations. In this novel, he points to some such inadequacies. When he depicts instances of throwing of twins into the Evil Forest, mutilating the dead and killing innocent Ikemefuna because the oracle of Hills and the caves pronounced it.

As a typical figure he certainly points to the fact that the African society with all its admirable simplicity, hospitality and innate goodness was subject to certain primeval forces and instincts. They were in a sense caught in the web of these and to articulate them in a bid to liberate his people from these unconscious forces and instincts. He was seised with the need for liberation from these as a necessary springboard for the eventual freedom from foreign domination and imperialistic forces and value systems. Achebe as a novelist was championing the cause of freedom, and liberation primarily of his own people from the shackles of colonial oppression and domination at two different levels. First of all he was committed to liberate his fellow writers of Africa from the rigid criteria and negative critique of the western/European scholars. He wanted to wipe out the false impression in the world of English literature that only the Europeans hold the key to successful and popular writing in English.

He wanted to prove beyond doubt that African writers in English have matured and can stand on the strength of their achievement, originality and contribution without the props of their western counterparts. Moreover he severely castigates the western critics for mercilessly and uncritically applying criteria and standards not suited to the African mentality, temper or situation. One should acknowledge that Achebe has to a high degree succeeded in exploding some of these western myths and in securing an unquestioned place for African writers in the world of English literature. In a sense Achebe strives to right the injustice done to his fellow African writers in English.

From this first layer of liberationist fervour he moved on to restore African society, culture and life to its original state of pride, preeminence and honour. This he does making the Nigerian people, their ancient traditions and customs and the devastating impact of the colonial rule on them, the central theme, message and thrust of his novels. He brings into focus the sharp contrast between the two cultures and the consequent dislocation, alienation and fragmentation playing havoc in an otherwise harmonious and well-knit tribal society. In Things Fall Apart. Achebe very subtly and artistically posits this confrontation and contrast when at the end of the novel he makes the British Commissioner think about his contemplated book for which he has good material in Okonkwo's death and which he likes to entitle "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger."

The use of the word "pacification" in the context of the Whitemen's reported activities or atrocities in different parts of Nigeria or Africa borne out not only by Achebe's writings but by others and government documents is vitriolic in its ironic thrust. According to the British, pacification was the route to civilisation and the Igbo were to be civilised by British standards, under British rule, using British-made imported goods, the English language and the Anglican Religion. Achebe takes strong exception to this superior and supercilious attitude of the British and therefore takes pains to assert that Religion is more divisive than any other colonial imposition.

Achebe has systematically tried to bring out the dissension, disunity, dislocation and violence "created" by the colonial intervention in his later novels. This Achebe undoubtedly sets out to respond to the consequences of the cataclysmic encounter of Europe with Africa. In this process he has tried to keep pace with the torrential changes that took place during the colonial era, the heady years of nationalist protest and the phase when lost freedom was regained by Africa.

Achebe doesn't slop his quest for uncovering the mechanisms of oppression by the colonial powers but goes on to expose the subtle manoeuvres and games played by the erstwhile rulers in securing their iron grip in the economic and intellectual fields. The note of disenchantment and anger at the failure of their own native leaders or marionettes (as Achebe calls them) who betrayed the cause of the people is quite discernible in most of his novels.

From this analysis it is obvious that Achebe is not just dealing with a historic past which is dead, but with a past that is still causing havoc in African society and polity and maintains, with a relentless and implacable force, a vast majority of the people in poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, powerlessness and marginalisation. And this is a complex situation requiring not just an isolated and individual response but a global answer of course to be spearheaded by the black people. Achebe in his own unique way tries to analyse this situation, articulate and verbalise the problem and to pose questions and suggest new avenues of finding possible solutions. Let me conclude this section with a quotation from Arthur Ravenscroft on this novel. Achebe's story is not a lament for the past but an analysis of a process of historical change.

Anand and Achebe belong to two different eras, continents and cultures. Though Anand was born in a Hindu family he is not a believer. Quite early in life, he was disillusioned with organised religion and faith. Subsequently he came under the influence of Marxism and leftist ideology. Achebe on the other hand is a Christian rooted in his faith but with a universal outlook. Both have had a share of the alienation consequent upon the British colonial impact, Anand through his western education and exposure in England and Europe, and Achebe as a follower of the whitemen's religion. In terms of style and technique, Anand and Achebe differ. But what is common to both these writers is their unquestionable commitment to the society they portray in their novels and the clarity of vision and purpose behind their works.

I believe this to be the key to their success as novelists and the reputation as leading contemporary English novelists. While Anand operates from humanist angle, Achebe believes in educating the readers both in Africa and outside about the African image and identity about their great traditions, philosophy and poetry.

When Anand asserts that a writer is a fiery voice of the people or a seer of a new vision, he is in effect underscoring the writer's duty to raise the consciousness of the people in general and of the oppressed masses in particular. Thus we see how the aims and ideologies of both these writers converge along the line of conscientisation (hulo Freire) leading to liberation. Both are sufficiently aware that the novel is in essence an art form and therefore all traces of propaganda should as far as possible be avoided. They also believe that the message is equally important. And it is a revelation how

Anand and Achebe have achieved this delicate balancing of the medium and the message, the matter and the form, ideological thrust and artistic integrity, of course each with his own level of mastery, individuality and success. The valuable and sometimes original insights and syntheses of both these writers in terms of their subjects, aim and fictional methods may help to evolve new paradigms not only of social critique but of socially relevant novels.

13

Aggression in Anand's *Untouchable*

Aggression, in literature, is not so much a surface representation of the physical manifestation of the aggressive act as a search for the human motifs leading to it. These human motifs arise both from within and without. A psychologist like Kaufmann would argue that aggression can be attributed directly to conditions in the external environment and not to aggressive instincts within the person. There is also the antithetical view that the act of aggression is nothing but direct and inescapable result of the aggressive instincts within the person. These two schools of thinking, intimately related as they are to the materialist and idealist approaches to human reality, are seen operative in the making of the two novels under discussion.

William Golding's Lord of the Flies dramatises a human condition in which the aggressive instincts are unleashed with animal ferocity, resulting in savagery, bloodshed and destruction. Golding here traces aggression to human nature, to the essential evil inherent in every human person. Mulk Raj Anand, on the other hand, does not attempt, in his Untouchable, to dramatise aggression in the strict sense of the term, but portrays, with deftness and subtlety, how the external environment of the protagonist changes him gradually, makes him give up his earlier position of utter submissiveness, gives him a critical faculty, helps him assume an aggressive posture and sets him on an endless search into an infinite future. Anand's protagonist discovers his self-identity and fights against a hostile social environment, to discover a world of new freedoms. The novel presents to us the drama of the gradual emergence of an aggressive mind, lit with a new knowledge, from an original psychic state of ignorance. Aggression, in this case, results from external social conditions.

Referring to Lord of the Flies, Golding once remarked that his attempt was to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. The whole action takes place in a coral island in the Pacific. An atomic war has already broken out. A plane crashlands on the coral island, the crew get killed, and a number of small boys are left stranded on the island. The boys have got everything there-pigs, water, food etc. They are completely free from corrupt influence of the adult world. The island is their Garden of Eden. Left to themselves in that world of pristine purity, the boys can lead a life of sweet innocence, until they are rescued. But it is just the reverse that takes place. The environment does not keep them free from guilt.

The boys begin to fear the presence of a beast in the island. The real beast, however, is within them. A group of boys led by Ralph and Piggy try their best to establish peace and order in the island.

But they are easily outnumbered by the group of hunters led by Jack whose aggressive instincts are let loose with tremendous destructive power. What follows is madness, murder, bloodshed and the shocking degeneration of the boys's society into brutal, naked barbarism. The hunters's bloodthirsty cries fill the air: "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Stop his blood!" Jack, in his dangerously frenzied aggressiveness, confronts Ralph. Simon, the visionary figure who could see into the truth of things, is beaten to death. Piggy, the symbol of sense and sanity, is crushed to death. The conch shell he carries is crushed to pieces. Ralph's desperate question "Which is better to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?'" simply falls on deaf ears. The whole island is finally set ablase. When at last a naval officer appears before Ralph, to save the boys, enough havoc has already been done:

> Ralph looked at him dumbly ... the island was scorched up like dead wood-Simon was dead-and Jack had ... The tears began to flow and sobs shook him .... And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and un wiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy.

Golding's depiction of the beastly horror of boys's society in the island is thus characterised by two important features. First, it shows that the mad aggressiveness of the boys arises from within their human nature, i.e., from the intrinsic evil inalienably present in their very being. Secondly, on a broader plane, as a parable of the contemporary human situation, it reveals the novelist's pessimistic conviction that the tragic predicament of man in the world is inescapable and beyond redemption.

Contrary to this metaphysical, tragic vision of Golding's is Anand's treatment of the growing aggressiveness of his protagonist in Untouchable. For, in Anand's novel, Bakha's growth towards aggressiveness (though in a limited sense) is not attributed to the instinct within him, but to the external objective situation that interacts with his consciousness. The novel narrates the events of a single day in the life of Bakha, who by nature is clean, swift and dignified, but who by profession is a sweeper, an outeaste whose job it is to clean latrines, and hence an untouchable.

The events are presented from the point of view of Bakha himself; Anand employs the stream-of-consciousness method which enables him to dramatise the interaction between consciousness and situation. The central event is Bakha's pollution of a rich Hindu merchant in the town, who then humiliates him before others. The event opens Bakha's eyes, and Bakha realises with a sudden shock what he really is in society: "Like a ray of light shooting through the darkness, the recognition of his position, the significance of his lot dawned upon him. It illuminated the inner chambers of his mind."

This new knowledge about himself further deepens as the day progresses. He sees Pandit Kalinath making lecherous advances towards his sister Sohini; he has to pick up a loaf of bread from the pavement thrown to him by a rich housewife; he is repulsed by the hostility of Colonel Hutchinson's embittered wife; he is confused by the alternative systems offered as the means for his liberation, viz., Christianity, Gandhism and the Machine.

A pertinent question arises: Does Bakha grow aggressive as Jack does in Lord of the Flies? The answer is this: Though he does not indulge in any act of aggression, his mind grows more and more aggressiveness he moves from experience to experience. This aggressiveness, however, does not find utterance in physical action, because, when the conscious part of his mind smoulders with an aggressive spirit, the unconscious part, with all its legacy for the past, compels him to withdraw. Anand's attempt here is to portray the gradual making of an aggressive mind.

The magnitude of the change Bakha undergoes can be understood if we compare his father Lakha's total acceptance of his fate with Bakha's growing propensity to revolt. For instance, soon after the "touch" incident, "there was a smouldering rage in his soul" He reacts aggressively to the priest's attempt to molest Sohini: "even the surging crowd seemed to show its heels as it saw the giant stride of the sweepers advance frighteningly towards the temple .... His fist was clenched." And he regrets his action of picking up a loaf of bread thrown to him by the rich lady: "I shouldn't have picked up that bread from the pavement." This infant aggressiveness of present mental state is part of the spirit of inquiry and critical faculty he has acquired through experience. And thus he grows into a visionary who sees into the future, who dreams of a future of infinite possibilities.

The treatment of the psychology of aggression in the two novels offers certain striking contrasts. First, there is the distinction in quality. In Lord of the Flies, aggression tantamounts to wanton, reckless, barbarous acts of violence; in Untouchable it is part of the protagonist's psychological progress from innocence to experience, part of a process of psychological maturing and of discovering new freedoms. Secondly, there is a difference in the matter of source. In Golding's works aggression results from natural (evil) human nature; in the latter work, aggression is fertilised through the interaction of character and situation. Aggressive behaviour, in the former, is traced back to human nature, whereas in the latter case the beginning of aggressive behaviour is traced back to objective external circumstances.

Finally, the aggressive behaviour of characters in Golding points to the author's deeply religious, metaphysical, abstract, pessimistic world-view; on the other hand, the treatment of aggressive psychology in Anand points to a humanistic, romantic, revolutionary approach to life. Golding's children are saved from the island, but they are taken away to the adult world where again the war is still raging. Anand's hero, however, does not live in a static world; he does not remain static; he grows. And when he walks back home at the end of the novel, he walks into a new future. The one prophesies doom: the other opens up new possibilities. As commentaries of the human situation both have universal relevance and appeal, but they point to different directions.

14

Finding the Voice of the Peasant: Agriculture, Neocolonialism and Mulk Raj Anand's Punjab Trilogy

With a very few exceptions, the cultures conquered by Europe and the United States in the great waves of capitalist colonisation in the 15th through 19th centuries had developed agricultures, which, to paraphrase Wendell Berry, fitted elegantly into the needs of the culture and the demands of the ecosystem. Some of the crops historically cultivated in the Americas, Asia, and Africa produced great wealth for the imperial power who took control of the land. Coffee, rubber, cotton, tobacco, and cocoa helped to fuel the empires of Europe, and led to everincreasing plantation systems around the globe as each imperial power attempted to break each other's monopoly in the various new crops.

The plantation system, operated by slaves and later indentured workers and underpaid laborers, both altered land use and increased the number of mouths to feed. Increasing the population while reducing the land dedicated to food production led to a growing reliance on monocultural crops to feed the laborers.

All across the globe indigenous agricultural practices were transformed to fit the imperial model. In a letter written while working on his Punjab trilogy, the Indian novelist Mulk Raj Anand discusses this transformation:

Imperialism destroyed the basis of the old village life and mechanically imposed a superstructure from the top. It sapped the whole foundation of the self-sufficient feudal village, but left another feudalism in its place. It destroyed the ancient forms, but left the festering sores of an age-long decay beneath the surface without making any serious attempt to heal the sick body, except treating it with patent medicines. It broke up and changed India, but refused to renew it.

The implementation of this superstructure had reverberations throughout the Indian rural economy. Viewing the local agricultural practices as unsophisticated, the British instituted new agricultural policies and altered the relationship of the peasants to the land they worked. These changes were described by the colonisers as modernisation, and, following independence, most former colonies continued the policies of agricultural production implemented by the invaders. In fact the transformation of agricultural practices was part of a grand development scheme known as the Green Revolution, in which the science developed during the Second World War was to be used to improve crop yields.

The millennia old agricultural knowledge, honed over the centuries to fit into the climate and culture of each region on the subcontinent, was replaced by United Nations and World Bank directives, written in Brussels and Washington, D.C. Vandana Shiva discusses the result of the disappearance of local economies and local knowledge in Monocultures of the Mind:

> The destruction of diversity and the creation of uniformity simultaneously involves the destruction of stability and the creation of vulnerability. Local knowledge on the other hand, focuses on multiple-use of diversity. Rice is not just grain, it provides straw for thatching and mat-making, fodder for livestock, bran for fish ponds, husk for fuel.... Local knowledge systems have evolved tall varieties of rice and wheat to satisfy multiple needs.

They have evolved sweet Cassava varieties whose leaves are palatable as fresh greens. However, all dominant research on cassava has focused on breeding new varieties for tuber yields, with leaves which are unpalatable.

Instead of neocolonial appropriation of biotechnology, the people of formerly colonised spaces must articulate an anticolonial policy which both protects the remaining natural resources in their regions and provides real economic relief to impoverished rural and urban workers. Lalu Singh is looking for the words to articulate the much needed resistance. He is, in the words of *The Bhagavad Gita*, "doing the work to be done" (*Bhagavad Gita* 3:19).

This insistence on ever larger yields was designed to industrialise agriculture, and as former farmers around the world can attest it was spectacularly successful. Fewer and fewer people were needed to work the land and those dispossessed were forced to migrate into urban areas to support themselves and their dependents. The other result was that the variety of produce declined. Certain types of rice and other grains vanished under governmental policies that encourage mass plantings of one or two "marketable" varieties. The loss is not merely culinary, but cultural as well.

While much of Mulk Raj Anand's reputation rests upon his two earliest books, Untouchable and Coolie, it is his Punjab trilogy–The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1940), and The Sword and the Sickle (1942)–that speaks directly to the implications for cultural and economic independence inherent in imported agricultural technologies. The Punjab trilogy traces the life of a character searching for another India, an India free of oppression, misery, and classism. Anand's protagonist in the trilogy looks at the situation in the Punjab from an ever-widening orbit, only to recognise that global movements devalue the very people they purport to help. In the end he rejects theory for action, returning to the peasant society he fled as a youth.

The Punjab trilogy can be read as a Bildungsroman, but a significant part of both, The Village and The Sword and the Sickle, the two books that take place in India, reveals the way the combination of colonialism and the modernist project destroy rural life in India. Vandana Shiva points out how the conflation of these two political systems has great significance in postcolonial countries:

> Science and technology are conventionally accepted as what scientists and technologists produce, and development is accepted as what science and technology produce. Scientists and technologists are in turn taken to be that sociological category formally trained in Western science and technology, either in institutions or organisations in the West, on Third World institutions mimicking the paradigms of the West. These tautological definitions are unproblematic if one leaves out people, especially poor people; if one ignores ecological and cultural diversity and distinct civilisational and natural histories of our planet which have created diverse and distinctive cultures and ecosystems. Development in this view is taken as synonymous with the introduction of Western science and technology in non-Western contexts. The magical identity is development=modernisation=Westernisation (Shiva, 135).

In The Village, Across the Black Waters, and The Sword and the Sickle, Mulk Raj Anand creates a character who battles against this "magical identity." Anand's novels chart the path of a peasant who desires to effect change and refuses to relinquish his power to those in society "who know best."

Lal Singh, the protagonist of the trilogy, grows up in a peasant family in the village of Nandpur in the Punjab of India. In the first volume, The Village, we follow Lalu as he emerges from childhood, feels trapped by his village and Sikhism, and leaves to join the British army. The Village ends with the death of Nihal Singh, Lal's father, and Lal's subsequent realisation that he will return to the village of Nandpur, "but not yet, not for a while" (Anand, Village, 285). In the second volume, Across the Black Waters, Lal Singh travels with his division to France and fights in the trenches, where he grows to realise that the European war is not his nor the Indian peoples' conflict. In The Sword and the Sickle, Lal returns to Nandpur, marries and becomes active in socialist politics, trying to chart a new way for the peasants of the Punjab.

The trilogy ends with Lal in prison, knowing his son has been born and working on a speech to give his fellow prisoners, and so life and resistance continue. Anand's three novels seem to examine three different levels of oppression in colonial India. The Village deals primarily with the oppression of the Indian landholders over the peasants emphasizing the hanging of Sharm Singh, Lalu's brother, over the murder of a landlord that ruined Nihal Singh's family. Across the Black Waters begins Lalu's questioning of the English rule of India, as he discovers in the horrors of war that Indian and English goals are not the same. The final novel in the trilogy, The Sword and the Sickle, finds Lalu working with a revolutionary group and confronting prejudice against the poor within the group itself.

Anand's trilogy is not a contained story: it offers no resolution and no easy answers. The Village particularly avoids glamorizing or romanticizing the rural lifestyle, describing the hard work and injustice every day brings to the Singh family. At the same time it does not overs entimentalise the peasants' lives. Anand attempts to show the joy and pain in village existence. Like the rest of the trilogy, The Village is very clear that the ultimate blame for the destruction of village life lies with the colonial system.

As Anand writes in the letter quoted earlier, imperialism "broke up and changed India, but refused to renew it" (Niven, 38). Throughout the trilogy, Lalu seeks that renewal, the change that will create better conditions for the peasants of his home. Ultimately he recognises that another externally imposed superstructure is not the answer to the peasants' problems; instead he will work at changing local conditions.

Lal Singh's father, Nihalu, has stories linked to the land and his neighbors that he tries to pass on to his own sons, stories that tell "their history together in that place" (Berry, 159). His sons are growing up in a new economy, however, where local knowledge is not sufficient to resist the technologies of colonialism that threaten the peasant's traditional lifestyle. The differences are made explicit in the exchange between Nihalu and his son Lalu over the railroad:

> "Whatever you say, Bapu, you know you would not like to be carrying all those sacks of grain to Manabad and Sherkot on your back. The bullock-cart drivers stop twenty times, to smoke and to feed the bullocks, and they often get drunk and take two days and a night sometimes. But you can send anything to town in an hour by the goods train."
>
> "You are a fool," snorted Nihal Singh impatiently. "You don't think of the hire, and the bribes you have to pay the Babu at the godown each end, and the difficulty of smuggling anything past those fiends at customs. You can take a bullock cart into town by a hundred devious ways...." (Anand ,Village, 6)

The local economy and the sustainable agriculture that Nihalu knew as a young man has vanished, and Nihalu recognises that this new technology and economy is a means to control the peasant and to ensure that the profits in the system imposed by the new economy go directly to the colonial authorities and their appointed elites.

The new export economies ensure the loss of diversity and the reliance on the marketplace which has disastrous results for the family of Nihalu Singh, who must rely on the price of grain to pay the ever-increasing taxes on their land. Harnam Singh, Nihalu's cousin expresses the bind of the peasants in the export economy:

"The darkness has come over the world... the darkness. Those people in the cities have raised their heads to the skies.... They say they have raised the tax on grain. And I am told the Sarkar is buying up the harvest cheap and storing it in the granaries so that it can sell at a profit. Theprices have fallen. How can they expect us to pay the taxes? And we all seem to be cutting each other's throats. Several of the peasants in the district were selling the last harvest so cheap in the market that I couldn't get a good price for mine" (Anand, Village, 27).

The Village sets up a dichotomy between the life of the peasants and the life of the city dwellers and between traditional local economy and the new technological marketplace imposed on the Punjab by the English. While Nihalu can remember a time before the British conquest of the Punjab in 1850, Lalu has never known anything but life under the British. In the space of sixty years, the British in the Punjab had endeavored to eradicate even imagined alternatives to their rule:

> The board of governors appointed to rule the Punjab functioned as despots, imbued with Platonic ideals of benevolence and restrained by Calvinist convictions and fears, yet despots nonetheless, armed with a staff of fifty-six of the brightest civil and military servants in the company's employ, and some sixteen thousand crack troops, who stood ready to shoot anyone so bold or foolish as to oppose their decisions (Wolpert, 230-231).

For Lalu, the British represent excitement, and when the bumbling British Deputy Commissioner assigned to the Manabad district imports the Boy Scouts to the Punjab, Lalu signs up and becomes patrol leader when he saves the Deputy High Commissioner from a water buffalo.

While the British see the Boy Scouts as a way to indoctrinate the peasant youth into British cultural identification, the local elite, represented by Harbans Singh, sees the Boy Scouts as a threat to their own exploitation of the peasant class. When Lalu, in his heady new role as patrol leader, attracts the romantic attention of his daughter Maya, Harbans Singh frames Lalu for theft, forcing him leave the village. He turns his back on the place where everyone knows him and marches into the anonymity of the British Army. He does not see the way the Boy Scouts also served to control him; instead all of his anger is directed toward Harbans Singh and the rest of Nandpur who will not resist the landlord's tyranny.

The second book in the trilogy, Across the Black Waters, is a fascinating account of colonialism and the First World War. Lalu has been excited to visitEurope, for his colonial schooling has told him that all good things come from the lands of the sahibs:

> He was going to Vilayat after all, England, the glamorous land of his dreams, where the sahibs come from, where people wore coats and pantaloons and led active, fashionable lives – even, so it was said, the peasants and the poor sahibs (Anand, Across, 9).

As the novel progresses and Lalu comes to know European peasants, he realises the stories are colonial myths, that poverty exists in Europe as surely as in his homeland. It is the realisation that drives him toward Marxism. The other myth Lalu rejects in the midst of war is that the European war is "another Mahabharata":

> The principles of light and darkness, right and wrong, were arrayed on opposite sides, fighting for supremacy, and all the powerful kingdoms within reach were drawn into the struggle as in the old days of the great war of Kurukshetra. Right, it was devoutly argued would triumph in the end, especially as Sri Krishna as incarnated in the Indians would show his hand (Anand, Village, 267).

This belief in right and wrong lasts as the Indians board ship, lasts as they arrive in Europe, and lasts as the French cheer their arrival. When they report to the front lines and the shrapnel begins fall all around the trench in which Lalu waits for the order to charge, he recognises the distance between the ideals that drive this European war and his own value system:

> The response of the sepoys seemed to show as if they had resigned themselves to their kismet. Covered by their army blankets, like hooded, bell-topped tents, snuggling in the folds of blankets, wrapped in their greatcoats, strapped and bandaged with an assortment of woolen rags on their legs, their backs, and their faces, they huddled together as they crouched over the warmth of a cigarette tip or the end of a candle, or stood by their rifles, elephantine mounds of flesh, placid and immobile and dumb, who would have to be drugged with liquor into warmth and madness before they could charge the enemy.
>
> For although they had been in the trenches only a few days, one hour had begun to seem to them like the other and each day like the last and the dreamy sameness of life in this unknown had begun to assert itself. A passionate people, prone to sudden exaltations and depressions, more faithful than any other if they believed, they were neutral in this war, because this was not a war for any of the religions of their inheritance, nor for any ideal which could fire their blood and make their hair stand on end.
>
> Ordered about by the Sarkar, they were as ready to thrust their bayonets into the bellies of the Germans as they had been to disembowel the frontier tribesmen, or their own countrymen, for the pound a month which the sahibs paid them. But they were like conscripts, brutalised and willing to fight like trained bulls, but without a will of their own, soulless automations in the execution of the army code, though in the strange dark deeps of their natures, unschooled by the Sarkar, there lay the sensitiveness of their own humanity, their hopes, their fears and their doubts. As if convinced by centuries of faith that the sentinels of Yama, the

God of Death, alone would be able to awaken them from their bored somnolence in the corridors of their journey to the netherworlds, they would begin to move, however slowly, when an N.C.O. came and shunted them into fatigue parties (Anand, Across, 133).

This is not another Mahabharata. Right and wrong are not at issue. Like many WWI novels, Across the Black Waters emphasises that the best persons die in wartime, though the definition of best in Anand seems to focus less on gallantry than on humanity. Lalu's two best friends in the army, Daddy Dhanoo and Uncle Kirpu both die in inauspicious manners: Dhanoo drowns in a ditch and Kirpu commits suicide while imprisoned for insubordination. The war in this book does not create heroes; it kills good men who might have lived anonymous lives in their own country. In the character of Lok Nath the novel illustrates the kind of person who will flourish under colonialism – the vicious, fawning, and scheming.

Lalu's time in the army cures him of his romantic ideal of Europe, he no longer envies the sahibs and believes their lives are richer. In the army, Lalu recognises the way the Boy Scouts have been preparing him to die for a country of which he is not a citisen. He has seen the horrors their system has brought upon themselves, and he returns to India prepared to resist it. The time in the army brings another important realisation for Lalu Singh that will follow him throughout the next novel:

> If his father had been alive and present, he would certainly have prophesied disaster for all those who had crossed the black waters, andhe would have regarded this war to which they were going as a curse laid upon the sahibs for trying to defy nature.
>
> "But why am I turning suspicious and thinking such thoughts?" he rebuked himself. He had always defied his father and preened himself on his schooling, and he did not

realise that he had inherited many of his father's qualities, not only the enduring ones such as his short, lithe wiry frame, his love of the land, his generosity, his stubborn pride and his humour, but also his faith and his naiveté (Anand, Across, 9).

His father, whose death ends the first novel, does live on in Lalu, though Lalu will follow other paths before returning to his father's example at the end of the final novel. The final book of the trilogy, The Sword and the Sickle, returns Lalu to Punjab. He has lived for a while as a German prisoner and for this he is humiliatingly discharged, "without the reward of a square of land that had been promised to each soldier, without the good conduct medal, without!" (Anand Sword, 24). Afterwards he turns back toward the life he rejected earlier: As if finding the way so easily along the road, he had solved all questions, he mumbled to himself, stamping the ground for emphasis: "My path is clear. I will go home." And, as if this was some kind of revelation, he smiled proudly, though, as he advanced a few steps, he felt foolish to be so absorbed in himself (Anand, 26).

For Lalu, it is a revelation, a change of direction which emerges out of his realisation that the European path leads him nowhere. The promises are empty; even in the midst of poverty, his family and friends had not deserted him the way the army had.

Though Lalu saw his family destroyed because of unjust taxes, he is not prepared for the situation he finds when he returns to home:

> So there were peasants with nowhere to go! That was strange! The country through which he had passed yesterday seemed green enough, and, apparently, there had been sufficient rain. How could there be a famine? (Anand, 32)

The peasants have been forced from their land because they do not fit into the new vision of agriculture the British have imposed on India, and which has since come to dominate worldwide agriculture production. The impetus behind the expulsion is advocated in G.B. Singh's Transformation of Agriculture: A Case Study of Punjab:

> Tradition is evidenced in fragmented, small sised farms, low capital investment, simple and unsophisticated working equipment, lack of use of chemical fertilisers, lack of quality seeds and crop-protection devices, defective land tenure and irrigational practices. Low levels of education and health are further hindrances. Peasant farmers are 'hard-headed' and regard traditional practices as providing security (Singh, 4).

Singh opposes this system of organic, self-sufficient farming with a "modernised" agriculture. He does admit that this system has its drawbacks:

> Even in areas of assured water, it did not favour the poor, small farmers and agricultural labourers. The new technology is basically a high-cost high-yield technology which demands capital investment beyond the means of small farmers who form the majority of the farming community (rather total population) throughout the country.... Despite the efforts of the government (conscious or otherwise) to reduce the gap between rich and poor, and to help make the small and marginal farmer an effective vector of economic progress, one obvious implication is that a substantial part of his profit (if any) will be siphoned off in debt repayments. The small sise of his holding in a high-input and expensive farm technology is serious enough a limitation. Finally, the long-run effects of farm mechanisation and automation reducing farm employment in a laboursurplus situation are inevitable and the continuing trends may lead to massive unemployment (Singh, 349).

Apparently, the hard-headed peasant farmers were right about traditional practices providing security, and 'modern' agriculture threatening their livelihood. Lalu is returning to Punjab as this move toward export agriculture is accelerating. The destruction of the rural lifestyle has proceeded apace during the time Lalu was away, in part because of the drive for more production to support the war effort. The taxation problems have also been exacerbated by the war:

> And in the war, when flour became four seers to a rupee in the bazaars of Manabad, they had bought grain at forty seers to a rupee and stored it. Aspell of dry weather, and the peasants who had hoped to wait for prices to go up, sold their grain dirt cheap and mortgaged their lands! Who could store cotton and the fire of his hunger together? (Anand, Sword 60)

Lalu's own land has been lost in this way while he was away. Now the hated landlord, Harbans Singh, lives in Nihalu Singh's house. His uncle, Harnam Singh, now works at the view blighting brick factory and preaches revolution, but simultaneously considers working as a farm labourer, "as if the earthiness of generations in him was calling him to accept serfdom rather than wage-slavery in the brick factory" (Anand Sword, 60). The village of Nandpur is completely changed, with the clowns of Lalu's childhood now advocating revolution and planning an attack on Harbans Singh.

While Lalu resists attacking the landlord, he does renew his relationship with Maya, and this time when he leaves Nandpur again, she goes along. Lalu goes to work organizing the peasants in another province into communes for Kanwar Rampal Singh, the Count in another province. In The Yoke of Pity, Alastair Niven writes that: "The Count is a socialist aristocrat, a Lord Byron defending the Luddites" and sees him as "the most complex and satisfying character" in The Sword and the Sickle (Niven, 75). Niven's own prose illustrates the problem the Count cannot overcome. He has more knowledge of Lord Byron's England, than he does of his own region. The revolutionary examples the Count looks to are European, and he is blind to the culture of his own country:

> The Count kept up a running commentary on Revolution and Revolutionaries, until he began to find difficulties in negotiating his way across the highway, which was completely devoid of such modern conveniences he had got used to in Europe–signposts. Not only could he not turn his head back to make speeches here on lack of signposts, but he could hardly take his eyes off the old road (Anand Sword, 253).

The Count looks for signposts along the road to revolution that do not exist in India; his revolution is set in a fantasy land. The Count is without the creativity to negotiate a revolutionary space without a map. Ultimately, he is unable to find alternatives to those European roadsigns, and consequently he cannot find his way to the Revolution. While the Count may mouth the words of Marxist revolution, he refuses to confront the hypocrisy of clinging to his aristocratic title spell of dry weather, and the peasants who had hoped to wait for prices to go up, sold their grain dirt cheap and mortgaged their lands! Who could store cotton and the fire of his hunger together? (Anand Sword, 60)

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And yet they were stubborn and would walk away if one of their prejudices was offended, as they had done at the feast, and they would resort to murder if they had a quarrel over a trickle of water in the fields. For, behind the abjectness into which the gentleness of their religious faith, the power of their priests and the force of their landlords had schooled them, behind the ashen deadness of their feeble frames there still smouldered the energy of long generations; behind the prolonged silences of the black clouds which lay heavily on their faces there seemed to a strong enough resistance, the power for ceaseless activity, even through dire agony and suffering. Who said they had no staying power? They who seemed to crumple up and die so early, also procreated with the abandon of animals (Anand Sword, 214).

Lalu Singh is the only character in The Sword and the Sickle who empathises with the peasantry the revolution is supposedly going to free. He knows their problems and their difficulties in resisting because he grew up a peasant. Lalu offers a different path to social change than the Count and Mahatma Gandhi. When we leave Lalu in the last novel, he is imprisoned, imagining the words he could say to simultaneously calm Maya, who fears for his life, and encourage his fellow peasants and prisoners to join the struggle against the tyranny that bleaches their land:

"'Two, three things were in my heart to say to you, Comrade...."

'You who have never known hunger, cold and loneliness, were always calling me back, Comrade, you were always remonstrating.

"Do not go, do not go, my love...."

'But it is only after the fight against those who enslave, Comrade, only after the struggle for the new way of life, that we shall rest and sing of the seasons.... Now is the time to learn the ways of struggle, my love, now is the time to live in and through the struggle.... Now is the time to change the world, to fight for Life and happiness; now is the time to sing, Comrade, brave songs of the struggle...."Oh, do not look so sad, my love; look up, sweetheart, look up, this is no time for sadness, but for struggle and for happiness (Anand Sword 385). But he does not utter a sound.

It is perhaps easiest to see this voicelessness as Lalu's – and perhaps Anand's – inability. to find the right words to foment a revolution among India's peasantry. Anand has developed this passionate character only to back him into a corner where he only can imagine that he has the oratorical skills necessary to alter society. Written long before Gayatri Spivak's influential essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Anand's ending of the trilogy could suggest that "in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak" (Spivak, 287).

I read this ending differently, however. Throughout The Sword and the Sickle Lalu has met great men of rhetoric but little action. His disenchantment with Gandhi and the Count stems from his feeling that while both preach change, neither follows through with action. As another revolutionary, argues: "The wild dreams of the exalted leaders flourish, and people begin to dream of glory, build up private myths of a revolution, in this world, in heaven, and nowhere in particular" (Anand Sword. 356). Lalu has rejected social theories for cultural work.

During the course of the three books, he has traveled in diverse company, learned from his father, his brothers, Daddy Dhanoo, Uncle Kirpu, Professor Verma, the Count, and Nehru. This wide experience has given him a view of the stratification of society and of the necessity for rural reform that values the peasant. In this, he is like C.L.R. James conception of Edgar in King Lear:

> In Lear, Shakespeare introduces the character Edgar who before the play is ended has appeared in six different roles; that is to say he has represented all the different stages in society. That is not accidental...
>
> Shakespeare at any rate, has reached the very depth of disillusionment with society and only a man who has been tempered with hard experiences in every sphere of society is fit to rule. Edgar will rule (James, 406).

Lal Singh prepares to begin a new stage in his revolutionary life at the end of Anand's trilogy. After trying to reject his peasant heritage, he turns back to it as a source of strength. He is the "proud peasant" the Count often mocked, and he willreturn to the farming communities with the experience he has gained and there work for social change. He will no longer accept the dichotomies of "intellectual" and "peasant," for he recognises that rural reforms must come from within a community, not imposed from outside, for outside solutions are merely another form of colonialism. His hair, that he cut as a rejection of the communal values in which he was raised, has grown out again symbolizing his return to the knowledge of his peasant ancestors.

While Anand recognised the destruction of traditional agricultural systems under colonial rule and the absorption of the agricultural goods and human labour of India into a global economic system benefiting the British and disenfranchising the Indians, it is doubtful that he could anticipated the lengths to which that disenfranchisement would expand in the neocolonial era. The local knowledge that Lal Singh returns to at the end of The Sword and the Sickle is particularly important given the technological juggernaut the seed and chemical companies of the United States and Europe are unleashing on world agriculture.

Like the implementation of the plantation system and the simultaneous extraction of economically viable plant and animal species which occurred in the centuries of enriching Europe, America, and Japan, while leaving the underdeveloped world impoverished. Instead of neocolonial appropriation of biotechnology, the people of formerly colonised spaces must articulate an anticolonial policy which both protects the remaining natural resources in their regions and provides real economic relief to impoverished rural and urban workers. Lalu Singh is looking for the words to articulate the much needed resistance. He is, in the words of *The Bhagavad Gita,* "doing the work to be done" (*Bhagavad Gita,* 3:19).

Genetic material from plants, animals, and even humans, is being removed from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific and trademarked by Western corporations in the hope that some of this material may prove useful to pharmaceutical industry in developing new medicines and the agrochemical industry in developing more resilient genetic hybrids. Referred to as biopiracy by its critics, this plundering of genetic material could ultimately prove far more profitable for the West than the plunder of mineral resources in the colonial era.

The move from pirating indigenous plants and animals to the theft of human cells has its precedent in the colonial transformation from resource extraction to an agricultural system based on the labour of nonEuropeans. As the first briefing by The Cornerhouse, entitled "No Patents on Life," concluded:

> The push for patents on genes is not altruistic. It is not about encouraging scientific endeavour or pushing the frontiers of medical knowledge. It is not about feeding the world or promoting the health and well-being of all. It is about ring-fencing knowledge. It is about privatizing the very basis oflife. The current proposals on biotech patenting have little to do with public good and much to do with private greed (Simpson, Hildyard, Sexton 11).

The patents will bring great financial gain to biotech companies and could help those individuals wealthy enough to buy the product distilled from plant, animal, or human. The persons in the region where the biopiracy occurred, however, will not benefit from the patent, nor will they be able to afford the patented product.

The rhetoric of altruism and feeding the world is also often used in enriching Europe, America, and Japan, while leaving the underdeveloped world impoverished. Instead of neocolonial appropriation of biotechnology, the people of formerly colonised spaces must articulate an anticolonial policy which both protects the remaining natural resources in their regions and provides real economic relief to impoverished rural and urban workers. Lalu Singh is looking for the words to articulate the much needed resistance. He is, in the words of *The Bhagavad Gita*, "doing the work to be done" (*Bhagavad Gita*, 3:19).

As biopiracy proceeds, genetically altered seeds are being introduced into the same regions by the same biotechnology corporations in an effort to affect the local systems of agricultural production. This technology is referred to by its creators and supporters as genetic trait control technology and by its detractors as Traitor and Terminator technologies. The implications of this technology are staggering.

Already certain corporations have developed herbicide resistant plants. Currently under development are chemically dependent crops – if a farmer does not provide the plants with a chemical fix at certain intervals during their growth, they will not bear fruit. A spokesperson for the US Department of Agriculture acknowledged that the USDA wanted "Terminator" technology "widely licensed and made expeditiously available to many seed companies in order to increase the value of proprietary seed owned by US seed companies and to open up new markets in Second and Third World countries". Genetic biodiversity is threatened by this new technology, since the development of new crops will be left to corporate engineers rather than the farmers who have created the incredible variety in foodstuffs since agriculture's beginning.

There has been active resistance to the new wave of biotechnology, protests in Europe and the United States staged by farmers, notably one by the French Confédération Paysanne, whose member José Bové has stated: "We are faced with a real choice for society. Either we accept intensive production and the huge reduction in the number of farmers in the sole interest of the World Market, or we create a farmers' agriculture for the benefit of everyone".

The majority of the protests by farmers, however, have taken place in postcolonial regions. In Monocultures of the Mind Vandana Shiva advocates the move back to the local that Lalu makes at the end of The Sword and the Sickle:

> In a wider context, where science is viewed as 'ways of knowing' and technology as 'ways of doing', all societies, in all their diversity, have had science and technology systems on which their distinct and diverse development has been based. Technologies or systems of technologies bridge the gap between nature's resources and human needs. Systems of knowledge and culture provide the framework for the perception and utilisation of natural resources.
>
> Two changes occur in this shift of definition of science and technology. Science and technology are no longer viewed as uniquely Western but as a plurality associated with all cultures and civilisations. And a particular science and technology do not automatically translate into development everywhere. Ecologically and economically inappropriate science and technology can become causes of under development and poverty, not solutions to underdevelopment and impoverishment. Ecological inappropriateness is a mismatch between the ecological processes of nature which renew life support systems and the resource demands and impacts of technological processes (Shiva, 135).

I do not want to end this essay with Lalu Singh still locked up in a jail cell, silent and dreaming, particularly given the global forces threatening his class and profession. Instead I choose to imagine a different ending, one in which Lalu leaves jail and walks back to Nandpur and life with Maya and their child. I choose to picture him looking for the science and technology of the place, looking to reinvent an economy that is more ecologically aligned, one that restores the land the peasants farm because it is their land and they are responsible to it. As the final statement on "Indigenous Peoples, Biodiversity and Intellectual Property" issued at the 1994 meeting at Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, insists: A system of protection and recognition of our resources and knowledge must be designed which conforms with our worldview and contains formulas that, in the short and medium term, will prevent the appropriation of our resources by the countries of the North and others.

If such a system of protection is not put in place, formerly colonised regions of the world, already stripped of much of their mineral and timber resources and forced to import manufactured items, will find their genetic resources furtherenriching Europe, America, and Japan, while leaving the underdeveloped world impoverished. Instead of neocolonial appropriation of biotechnology, the people of formerly colonised spaces must articulate an anticolonial policy which both protects the remaining natural resources in their regions and provides real economic relief to impoverished rural and urban workers. Lalu Singh is looking for the words to articulate the much needed resistance. He is, in the words of The Bhagavad Gita, "doing the work to be done" (Bhagavad Gita, 3:19).

15

The Big Heart: The Gathering of the Crows

The Big Heart is the story of a community in which there is just enough machine to destroy the craftsmen but not enough to create a new society. History takes its toll: "though water keeps on flowing, the earth crumbles.'" Two families are determined to prosper at the cost of the whole community. "Only the hard-headed and the hard-hearted, who trudged with vibration less feet in the 'Cities of Gold' and made the middle man's profit" (16) have the power to survive. "One way or another, therefore, Billimaran has changed outwardly with the shadows which fall across it and in the inner life of its novels, because the eyes of the brass idols contemplate with their eternal stares the European celluloid combs, the Pears soap, the bits of glassware, the rubber dolls, the electroplated jewellery, and the aluminium strewn about. ... And they do not know the meridians beyond the length and breadth of Billimaran until they are carried out, feet first to join the elements."

There is the Clock Tower which throws its shadow a few hundred yards away. It represents historical Time. The lane lives in Eternal Time symbolised by a two-headed serpent "Apart from the usual mouth which even a cui de sac keeps open, it has another, which makes it really like a two headed snake." (16) The conflict operates at two levels in the shadow of the clock tower and around the shadowless two-headed snake: "The older members of their community bend like gnomes before the fires in mature furnaces, soldering the joints of household utensils or crouching in the doorways, their lined faces groping for light in a world where, they say, the 'darkness is spreading' (18)

The community described here is the thither community, the community that skilfully beats the sheets of metal into the shapes of utensils. There are types and there are individuals, as in all the novels of Anand. There are archetypal situations the release of dark lava from below the layers of the city called man. There are eternal situations within historical time and the heroism of Man is crystallised in Ananta who is turbulent in spirit and wanton in reaching out after life: "he sensed now and then the poise of a furious calm in himself, like that of a leaf suddenly come still in a storm, specially after he had been struggling like a tormented beast in the cage of his soul. At such times he rose above his sense of doom and looked on himself as a person whose lusts were the reaction to other people's envy of him, whose depravity and drunkenness were a fight against the debris of broken idols in his mother's home, whose hotheadedness was a protest against the...decay around him.

And then he was dimly aware that his sudden love of 'Revolution' that had burst out like a red flower in Bombay, was due to the disgust he felt for the selfishness of his youth." "Inside ,him his awareness of a poverty which spread from Madanpura (in Bombay) to Billimaran (in Amritsar) burnt in a dark cloud, heavy and oppressive, and all he could do was to curse the country in which there was always an endless scarcity, punctuated every now and then by a famine. 'Lord God! what a land!' he muttered under his breath, as he withdrew his wincing eyes from the stares which followed him. And he felt as though an enormous shadow was creeping up to his neck from behind him." (35) Ananta tells his mistress Janki: "And I suddenly feel frightened Janki.

Frightened of something I don't know what, almost as if there were ghosts in this room trying to claim us." (139) This fear is expressed pictorially in delicate strokes. He sees a dream: "stark silence had brooded over the cremation ground, and his mother, his dead mother, had stood burning, even as she was exhorting him to look after his step-mother Karmo. And then, suddenly, he had seen himself, was it on the platform of the railway station or the base of the Clock Tower?" A crowd follows him as he is interrupted with a wail by his mistress: "The crowd had become like the masked men he had seen in the dacoit films in Bombay." Looking back he saw the Goddess Kali dancing over corpses and saying "I am hungry! I want blood." (20) Consciously or unconsciously Kali had become the same symbol of Eternal Time in Anand's hands which a two-headed snake is. Kali is Time metaphysically. Even Krishna says in the Gita:

> I am Time, the great destroyer of the world. Even without thee all the warriors who are standing in the hostile armies shall not be. (XI:32)

But there is something ominous even in the fall of a sparrow the crows that constantly gather over the temple make the unblinking stare of the brass idols really significant. The dream haunts him: "As he proceeded towards the Octroi Post, however he saw whole crowds of women huddled together, the whites of their eyes glued in empty stares from hollows deep like those in unburnt skulls on the cremation ground in his dream last night."

The walls of the prison house are created by historical time but they are as much the result of man's existence. It is called "a tormented beast in the cage of his soul." The ominous dream-like element as present throughout. Dina, who is lame, becomes another symbolic element: "I may not be able to walk straight but I can fly anywhere I like. I can fold up my legs and levitate at will.' And Ananta also remembers to have seen a crowd coming towards, him in the dream. Looking at the giant greasy black image of Kali, he says to himself "How queer! I have grown up to be a man right under the shadow of this image and yet I can't learn to be at ease with her." Marc Chagall has something very important to say on this point:

> Everything may change in our demoralised world except the heart, man's love and his striving to know the divine. Paintinng, like poetry, has a part in the divine; people feel this as much today as they used to.... I learnt that there was also another world.

The strange tragic awareness of Ananta is analysed: "Ananta had made the acquaintance of pain early, having been left an orphan. But he had wrestled with it and almost conquered it with his great capacity for happiness.... Since his mature years, however, he had seen it as the constant undertone of life, almost omnipresent whether he happened to be in Amritsar or Lahore, Gurdaspur, Mandi, Delhi or Bombay, a kind of grim joke, a leer, a putrid sewer running like an invisible drain across the earth ... and then flooding the earth in sudden eruptions every now and then and laying it waste for generations."

Janki, his mistress, is more shrewd in her observation of life. This novel was written in 1944 and yet what Janki says has the ring of a prophet's voice: "You know, ... I saw so many people in your movement in Bombai who were suffering from swollen heads that I am rather sceptical of everyone's sincerity-including yours! I don't mean Comrade Joshi or Adhikari." (173) The Communist Party of India already disowns P.C. Joshi though he was almost the founder of it. And Janki has seen the cheap and vulgar heroism and its hollowness, "All that talk about hours and wages and bread is illusion, a web woven by spiders to trap the flies if it is not accompanied by love of God. You are right to say we need patience, but all this talk about courage." (175) That is why we are assured that many things had made her imagine the cruelty of life in many ways but she always suffered in secret and her individual experience always ended with her sharp awareness of the impending death. Janki's probe anticipates the method of Edmund Husserl in an existentialist situation, "Somehow my illness has tom away all the sheaths in which I used to wrap myself as a woman, even as it has left my bones bare of flesh. And I can see through all the disguises and pretences of my life before I make my peace with God." (174) And she explains almost in the same strain how everybody from parents, husband, revolutionaries and even the followers of the Mahatma tried to destroy her individuality.

The coming of the machine is reflected on different planes of Reality. Sadanand seeks status by breaking away from poor relations: "Please come and grace our house and be assured that our family at any rate has no connection whatever with the Aga Khan. My father goes to Durbar Sahib, as I told you, and he adopted the Mahant of Kanowan as a Guru; my brother, the overseer, at Allahabad is a follower of Radhaswami, and my elder son Gopi and I go to Arya Samaj. And little Nikka, by the grace of God and your kindness, will grow up to be a skilled mechanic and not a thathiar." (136) The thathiar boys who work in the factory look for any mischief that would relieve the tedium of minding the machines. (117)

The machine reduces the wages of the craftsmen. Ananta protests: "But you can't reduce an established wage. Give me what you have always given me. It is not a mere figure in a ledger. It represents work, labour, the day I have spent on it." (96) The mechanics reduce an old craftsman Mehru to the status of a sweeper. The guilt is the prison inside, the poverty is the prison outside: "The feeling of guilt surged up, beneath the fear above the glare of sunlight which poured cruelly in several shafts through the window with the iron bars in the back wall of the factory." To the skilled craftsmen the job at the machine became boring. The middle class has murder on its hands, Ananta understands: "Don't you think ... that it is those respectable people who, having no strength, enter

Government service who are responsible for oppressing poeple everywhere? They look so meek and mild."

Cheap heroism is the hallmark of the middle class. That misled insane cheap heroism and lust for personal power is depicted through Satyapal. Anand had anticipated Regis Debray who says in Revolution in the Revolution: "It has been proved that certain political or ideological struggles, certain public polemics, have only delayed the opening of the decisive mass struggle." He says further, Antibodies must be created at the base, at the level of the masses, by offering them a real alternative within their reach." And the city life is summed up beauufully by Debray: "The city dweller lives as a consumer. As long as he has some cash in his pocket, it suffices for his dally needs .... Men garotte each other in order to assert their superiority but they no longer fight to survive."

In Confession of a Lover, Mr. Shah says: "For thousands of years India has been for forty people or four hundred or four thousand at the most."

Ananta is devoted to the cause. "And in his love for the cause, in the service of the trade union movement, he had often forgotten her and neglected her." He even becomes a beggar to get some kara parshad for the children: "May you prosper Sardarji .... May your family prosper for three generations." There are female beggars too giving out little wheezing cries. "He did not know how to face the beggars. And for that reason he felt a revulsion of hatred against them."

In The Big Heart, the sorrow is always in the air. The classical time which a hereditary musician plays on sitar releases in Ananta a view of the impermanence of all things. As soon as he realised this, "he hurried away like a thief in panic."

Ananta is a delicate lover like all revolutionaries. Long before he had met Janki at the shrine of the sages in the village of Kanowan in Gurdaspur district, she had been consumed by an insidious tuberculosis: "He did not know when the disease had begun to eat Into her, whether before the death of her husband or afterwards. But it made him impatient with apprehension, for if she died on his hands he knew what people would say about his having dragged her to ruin."

There is a silent tenderness between the love of this lion and the bedridden woman. His concern for her is very deep. Anand never wastes words on defining it. There are only two passages in the whole book which describe the physical side of their love. One is about the memories of the past. The other is in the beginning of the book and it shows his utter helplessness:

Janki took Ananta's hand to her breasts and looked tenderly at him. But unlike the old days, he withdrew his eyes and hung his head down.

"What is it? What is the matter?" she asked.

"Nothing," he said, "nothing Jankiai." And he looked away at the room and the confusion of clothes, cooking utensils, faded flowers and fruits that were about. He was irritated by the disarray and wanted to clean up and set things in order. He was surprised at this impulse in him, for he had always reacted against his stepmother's love of cleanliness and had liked Janki because she believed in leaving loose ends of things about her. (38)

There is a famine in the land and human beings fight like dogs over a small piece of bread. The opening of the factory by Chaudharis, Gokul Chand and Murli Dhar, has made almost all the skilled thathiars jobless. Life has become miserable and Anand has built up the misery in a sequence of images in a single day. There are haunting situations which provide the setting for the crisis:

> There was a huddle of women concentrated like hens on a rubbish-heap on something in their midst, while two of them held the ends of a rag in

> the form of a canopy to protect them all from the angry sun overhead.

"A child is born," one of them said, and waved him on as they noticed his probing eyes.

Insecurity always produces make-believe in crisis. This crowd of desperate people is helpless to get a handful of flour. Constantly threatened by the police, they are like angry tomcats running to and fro and sharpening their claws. The darkened mind is that of Ananta's friend Ralia, and he has built himself up as a comic-strip hero. His power lies in his fancy, but his fancy is essentially contradictory to the actual situation. Two things which distinguish him from others are his constant reference to rape and the belittling of the power of the machine. He is a blind beast incapable of foresight. Right in the beginning of the novel, he gives a slap to Channa. His talk is always the same from the time novel begins:

> "Han,we shall see who shall have the last laugh!" Ralia raved with a resurgence of his pride and anger as he raced up to Ananta, because the latter was drifting away. "Babin chod, we shall see! Look, look there, and, if you have had your ears cleaned of dirt, listen to what they are saying! 'Chappar chappar .... Cheekh ... Phuff ... Phuff ... Chappar ... chappar ... Cheekh.' Fool, listen!. They are drinking the blood of the lives of those boys in there. They are swallowing their bones, masticating, crunch, crunch. "And they are"

Ralia gets lost in his own fancy and then loses all sense of reality. Insecurity has made him exaggerate his own strength. He identifies strength to act with sexual potency. Therefore he feels that if he indulges in inertia, his whole manhood, his sexual potency would become questionable.

On the other hand, Ananta is a man of delicate feelings about sex and a realist. Ananta believes in organisation but knows that violence cannot help. He neglected Janki during his trade union days in Bombay, that is, he transferred his tenderness for Janki to the movement. He is faced with Satyapal, a man who is in love with his own voice. "Satyapal seemed to have gained in authority from his simplification of the issue and his self-dramatisation, which made him the vehicle of extremism" (205) and in addition he has derived his violence from the Azad Hind Radio. Khushal Chand who had defected from the ranks of the "Haves" to the ranks of the "Have-nots" talks sense: "If you want to bring a little sunshine into the lives of Billimaran, please don't soar into the heavens .... Let us settle this business, so that the workers light the torch of Revolution in themselves. Men must learn by themselves ... and by their own experience, rather than through words poured into them."

And as always in Anand's novels, the highest wisdom belongs to the poet, Puran Singh Bhagat, who reminds one of his namesake the great Punjabi poet Sardar Puran Singh: "Having been a Yogi myself," said the poet, "I believe that some faith is necessary. If men trust in themselves, and in the other men, with whom they live together, and they are dedicated to building and creating something new by breaking down dead habits and evil customs and shams. I think there can emerge a new kind of brotherhood, a new sense of devotion like the 'Bhakti' which our saint Kabir preached and practised. I have seen glimpses of this religion already in my travels."

But, as usual, the saner elements are destroyed by the middle-class leaders Satyapal and Prof. Mejid who incite confusion in the hopeless crowd. Ralia is worked up to a frenzy and he starts breaking the machines. He begins to believe that machine is like a woman who can be raped and destroyed and then his intense hostility makes him lose his identity completely: "Let them come and pull my hair, let them push themselves up against me, twist and turn and clutch and revolve! ... I want to be raped! I am a bitch, see! So I want young blood! Let them come and I will embrace them." (215-16) And in this madness Ralia goes beyond control: "He viciously lifted and struck Ananta's head on the broken part of a machine with a maniacal fury, till Ananta's skull cracked like a pitcher, and a stream of blood shot out in thick spurts." (219)

Only a couple of hours ago Ananta had given a party to the community with the very little money he had, only a couple of hours ago he had, taken food to Janki tenderly, only a couple of hours ago he had watched the gathering of the crows over the temple of Kali. Now everything was over.

The poet was left who felt his warm nature congealed and benumbed. The mother was left who had said in the beginning of the novel: "(When shall I see you married?) The women of the brotherhood will come to beat the drum, and the young girls will sing, and there will be the bridal party." (26)

And Janki. "'I feel mad, mad, crazy!' she shrieked 'I shall go crazy like the witch-woman in the streets! I cannot bear it! It may be possible for all those who saw him murdered to be consoled, but ... I can't do nothing but weep.' And she broke down in an hysterical fit of weeping, and moaned: 'He is dead ... Oh, he was such a noble creature-so much nobler than all those louts! He is dead .... And all my life has ended with his going.'"

And the poet too much in love with ideas to remain silent says: "Perhaps the life of Ananta I mean the way he lived may be a greater example for them than any words he could have spoken. Why, they may even recall the wise things he said to them now that he is dead." The poet reflected that the broken machines, being inanimate, had died easily, whereas the man Ananta was really immortal from the memories of him that he had left behind in the consciences of his friends and relations. He shyly agrees to protect Janki for whose flesh the human vultures wait outside.

A day, which had begun with a dream of the cremation ground and through which the crows had been gathering on the shrine of Kali, comes to an end. "An evening crow cawed his last message of doom before flying away from the window-still outside the room."

16

The Barber's Trade Union: A Criticism

Indeed, one of the chief sources of pleasure in reading fiction is its satisfaction of our desire to know more about ourselves as we function together in society. In his essay "Trends in the Modem Indian Novel," Anand makes a categorical statement about the true function of literature. "I believe," he says, "that literature, though universally significant, deals with a contemporary situation." Only the critic who is obsessed with the concept of pure form could ignore the apparent concern of modem fiction with the social background.

It is a fact that a true artist eschews normally the conscious adoption of a specific creed or philosophy. But the demands of the society in the early decades of the twentieth century were such that only the lesser writers could escape these. The rise of fascism and the shock of the Great Depression of the late twenties throughout the world led to a search for a better understanding of democratic principles and a respect for humanistic values.

The General Strike in 1926 in Britain made the writers conscious of the class war between the "haves" and the" have-nots." Consequently, the sociological approach to literature became a worldwide phenomenon. Writers as varied as Spender and Auden in England, Gide and Malraux in France, Sinclair and Steinbeck in America, Premchand and Mulk Raj Anand in India manifested the same tendency. "We had set our hearts," writes Anand, "on our liberation and those of our oppressed peoples, however they were, wherever they were and whatever shape, sise and colour."

Anand felt equally concerned about the pathetic plight of the poor in India. He was quite aware that "a great many of our people suffered from poverty and squalor around us with a patience that was truly heroic." If on the one hand he exposed the economic inequalities, on the other he became a militant critic of the baser elements in the Indian tradition. The sardonic savagery in Anand's arraignment of the moneyed class is evident in his early fiction.

"The Barber's Trade Union," the tale of a dynamic barber boy, is a satisfying diversion from the serious novels that preceded it, namely Coolie Untouchable, the Lalu trilogy. It explicates the conflict between a barber and the traditional society. The exploitation of the poor, the downtrodden and the oppressed--a recurring theme in Anand's major fiction is handled here with a deft touch of comedy. As a proletarian humanist, Anand has full faith in the dignity and potentiality of man. In this story, he retrieves this "dignity" denied to the protagonist by the high-caste Hindus. The problem of caste distinctions is not merely limelighted, but a happy solution is indicated at the end. Anand's aim here, like Jonson's and Dickens's is not merely to instruct but to "mix profit with pleasure."

The setting of the story is a typically North Indian village; the focus is clearly determined. The anonymous narrator, like Conrad's Marlow, is a character in the story and the events are filtered through his consciousness. And, like Marlow again, the narrator is sympathetic towards the protagonist. The events in the story are an outgrowth of its central character named Chandu. He is introduced by the story writer, as if in a mockheroic fashion, lending him heroic heights: ., Among the makers of modem India, Chandu, the barber boy of our village, has a place which will be denied him unless I press for the recognition of his contribution to history." This humorous description in the opening lines promises the reader an interesting narrative.

Chandu is both an individual and a type. Unconsciously though, he embarks on an exploit which ultimately brings about his emancipation. Chandu, we are told, is natively egotistical like most great men of India, but unlike them he nourishes no exaggerated opinion of himself. Here, Anand's good-humoured dig at the "self-professed" leaders of the nation is more than ohvious.

Chandu's portraiture as the underprivileged lad of the village is highly realistic. While at school he is weak in Mathematics because, at the instance of his father, he has to seek apprenticeship to the hereditary profession of the barber's caste. He is sent out hair-cutting in the village and this keeps the young boy too occupied to devote time to his studies. Like Anand's other heroes, he is a victim of society.

The narrator's mother constantly dissuades him from playing with Chandu saying that he is a low-caste barber's son and that he (the narrator) ought to keep up the status of his caste and class. After his father's death, Chandu has but to quit studies. At this tender age, he embraces his profession wholeheartedly and, as a routine, makes the rounds of the high-caste notables every morning for shaving and hair-cutting.

All goes well until, one day, Chandu decides impishly to dress up like the city doctor Kalan Khan in a white turban, a white rubber coat, with a leather bag in hand. The doctor's dress represents a happy change from the ossified order and the stagnant condition of life to which Chandu was born. His fascination for medical profession is, after all, justifiable for historical reasons. Is the ancient-time barber not the forerunner of modem surgery! Chandu is conscious of this heritage for, as he says, he "learnt how to treat pimples, boils and cuts on people's bodies from my father, who learnt them from his father before him."

Chandu's appearance in the new garb causes unprecedented disorder in the village. The stratified society that believes in hierarchy pooh-poohs him. The burly landlord threatens to have him flogged if he does not revert to wearing clothes befitting "his low status" as a barber: "The son of a pig! ... Get out! Get out! .... You will defile my religion." Chandu is made aware of the fact that being what he is, he cannot wear these clothes. The village Sahukar goes a step ahead and hurls the vilest abuses on him: "You little swine, you go disguising yourself as a clown when you ought to be bearing your responsibilities and looking after your mother."

Pandit Parmanand, the keeper of the village shrine, is no less vehement in his outburst: "he is a low-caste devil! He is a rogue!" This is the last straw on the camel's back and leaves Chandu crestfallen. The events move on recklessly gathering momentum to lead the hero on to a final confrontation with reality. The tone, depressingly sober during the earlier scene, undergoes a marked change in the succeeding part of the story, giving sudden relief to the reader. The comic genius of Anand transforms a pathetic tale into an uproarious comedy.

Chandu, insulted and humiliated by the village superiors, takes to a path of action. He revolts against his lot to find a way out of his predicament. Though he belongs to a lower strata of society, Chandu is not dull-witted. With the intent of teaching the orthodox idiots a lesson, he abandons his practice in the village. Instead he frequents the town to earn his livelihood.

The ingenious scheme works out successfully. The lack of barber's services unleashes a spate of problems. The landlord's face is dirtied by the white scum of his unshaved beard; the Sahukar looks like a leper with the brown tinge of tobacco on his walrus moustache. The village elders become ludicrous figures and the town urchins drive malicious pleasure, shouting loose remarks at them. The jokes about the unkempt beards of the elders of the village become current in every home.

The repercussions of the strike are far-reaching and Anand as a comic writer is at his best when he glibly remarks: "And it was said that at least the landlord's wife threatened to run away with somebody, because, being younger than her husband by twenty years, she had borne with him as long as he kept himself in trim, but was now disgusted with him beyond the limits of reconciliation."

While Chandu flourishes in the town, the village elders smart under the new situation. They fail to get a barber from the neighbouring village of Verka even on a double payment. Chandu summons his cousin and other barbers within a range of seven miles from his village to a special congregation of his craft and convinces them that it was time the elders of the village came to them to be shaved rather than their dancing attendance upon these so-called lords. Seeing reason in his argument, the fellow-barbers organise themselves and launch' 'Rajkot District Barber Brothers' Hairdressing and Shaving Saloon,' thus heralding the birth of a new era.

In the writing of the story, Anand has both a literary as well as a moral aim. In the portraiture of Chandu, he draws attention to the social problems which in the thirties and forties were accentuated by the glaring contrast between the material comforts of the rich and the destitution of thousands of poor people. As a skilled story-teller, Anand gives a clarion call to the nation to rouse from the slumber of dead habits and age-old traditions. A strain for social awareness is indeed central to the story. But the rendering of it by Anand casts such a spell on the reader that he is least conscious of it. The highly absorbing narrative constantly arouses the reader's curiosity and imagination and the reading of it proves to be an illuminating experience for him.

17

Across the Black Waters: The Attitude of the Hero

The landscape of France painted casually reminds one of the landscapes of the American painter Wyeth, because it paints the effect of sunlight on grass and a clear sky:

> Every blade of grass between the tents on the racecourse shone in the light of the rising sun, while a sharp cool breese blew from where the blue line of the sky lost itself in the mist around the dove-coloured chateaus on the hills."

One of the many themes of Across the Black Waters is the unity of all mankind: "And then there was an attempt at an exchange in the language of gesture. And, what was stranger, the mime worked. And soon there was complete understanding between East and West."

But the colonial powers have destroyed this unity: "The groups of sepoys who stood by Lalu and Kirpu and Lachman turned from the shining splendour of the trucks to explore each others' faces. The excitement, the exhilaration in their eyes subsided amidst the furrows of shame carved by the past humiliations inflicted on them by superior officers, and they stood baffled as though struck by an electric shock, because the bullying of an officer who was their friend a day ago seemed like a fresh wound in the changed circumstances of their lives."

Even then Lalu is learning much. The contact with the West is liberating him in many ways: "'In every land, even in our own country it could be like this,' said Lalu 'But our elders say, "It is not the custom to do this, it is not the custom to do that." Fools! If you are seen drinking a pot of wine you are automatically declared a drunkard, and if you look at a woman you at once become notorious as a rogue, a pimp and a whoremonger and your parents tell you that you have cut their nose in the brotherhood and no one will give you his daughter in marriage. Burnt up people! Owls!".

In spite of this, Lalu suffers loneliness and alienation. "Instead of laughing or smiling as others did, Lalu found himself contracting into his own skin, till he felt himself reduced to an emptiness from the centre of which his two eyes seemed to see this world as an enormous enclosure, crowded by hordes of hard, gigantic shapes which were oppressing him." The Rigveda has a line: "We want women as the parched frogs of summer want rain." The sepoys are hungry for female company. The women they see are different from the women at home: "The girls seemed to be laughing at all of them in spite of all the blandishments which they were practising."

When the camp makes preparation for departure it is busy like an anthill. It is shown to us by the long shot technique of the cinema: "The only consolation was that every other man in the regiment seemed to be on fatigue duty of one kind or another on the day of departure, packing his kitbag and giving a comrade a hand if not doing any heavier work.

And the camp was busy as an anthill: here a sepoy sitting by a line of unpacked luggage, wondering how to fit all the things into his kitbag while a pair of boots lay outside besides a pan and a water-bottle; there some of the men sat on ammunition boxes, shouting for an N.C.O., to ask what to do with themselves; next horses of the artillery neighing and coughing and stamping nervously while their riders polished the skin of their flanks; and there were orders, shouts, cries and laughter and the babble of an army speaking a hundred different tongues."

They find that the train they take is worse than the train from Amritsar to Pathankot during the Diwali fair. They exchange notes when they are together. Lok Nath says, "Officers and men belong to one family. In the English regiments they play their games together, work together and share all the discomforts together.... The difficulty with our Hindustani regiments is that the ranks lose all sense of respect for their superiors as soon as the officers begin to mix with them." But it is Kirpu who analyses the economic problem, which is the same allover the world: "The people who give you small holdings take them back.... It is the same in the Kangra district as in Franceville and in China."

Lalu is getting accustomed to the new life-the lassitude of an unwashed, unkept, soot-covered body, as well as to the heaviness of limbs in spite of the draughts of brandy which he drinks.

Anand was brought up in a military surrounding and had himself fought in the Spanish Civil War. This novel sums up his impression of army-life. The trains seem to come from an unknown land and go to an unknown land: "No one asked where the war was or why it was being fought and how it happened that they were going there." When they come across a hospital train, a dread spreads over silence. Would these soldiers die or recover from their wounds? Lalu preferred to die rather than lose a limb:

> The smell of the hospital train seemed to overpower him now. He shook his head and tried to extricate himself from the position in which he stood, but Kirpu was next to him and he had let another sepoy push his head into the door. He waited so as not to disturb them. But he felt the stench creeping into his nostrils while his veins swelled. He was faint

> The bile of sickness was gathering saliva in his mouth. He kept rigidly where he was, hoping that the waves of nausea would pass. And he tried to breathe deeply as he felt the atmosphere getting rarer. Before he could move and recover, however, the dark of weakness descended on him and his head hung limply before him.

There is the other train in which the sepoys are travelling: "When all the restful postures of the body which one could adopt had been adopted and readopted, till every movement was a back-aching abomination, when all the thoughts that one could think had been thought, there was nothing to do but to endure it". The waiting frail French women look like Indian women. The French soldiers say farewell to their families in a way totally different from the way in which Lalu had. Lalu was shy and had thought that it was against fashion to show too much emotion.

When the train seems to be dribbling along slower than ever, he wonders naively if the engine driver was afraid. And his loneliness returns. He feels alone in the grey morning of this vast alien earth, "which was a vaster earth and vaster sea beyond which again was the vaster sky."

Daddy Dhanoo is an unforgettable character. He lives without encouragement. He eats well and puts his sacred thread on his ear the first thing in the morning before relieving himself. He is fond of snuff and can sleep in any position at any place. He is imperious to everything except orders.

There is just a little touch of Falstaff about him. He had hoped on the outbreak of war that he would be disqualified from service abroad and sent on pension, he had had no objection to the idea of going to fight and die in foreign land. For him Sarkar's order is to be obeyed, though he is too stupid to understand abstract ideas like duty: "For to him, 'Obedience' and 'Duty' were with 'God' not only the ultimate laws of the Universe but interchangeable." He heard badly but his ears seemed surprisingly sensitive to the words of officers.

He was blearyeyed and often slept, but the red eyes popped out whenever he saw an officer coming. His rough, shapeless body was awkward in the ordinary way but he could keep his step in the route march. In spite of his stupidity he could find out the subtlest shades of meaning from the laws of the army. He was always ready to make the utmost sacrifice of which he was capable. His hardy hillman's will was nourished on snuff and more snuff. In the train Daddy Dhanoo says, "I hear that the Angrezi Badshah is a gentleman .... But the Kaiser is bad tempered and low born."

There is a scarcity of landscape in the novel of trenches filled with rain-water. But there are touches to show that something old and beautiful is being destroyed by war: "Lalu's eyes were attracted by the shadow of a roofless church whose steeples lay broken by deeply rusted Walls, beyond the square lined with vehicles of all sorts and sises, by houses which were mere debris."

Anand never exaggerates. No other novel of his recreates the atmosphere in such detail as does Across the Black Waters. The influence of Eric Maria, Remarque, Ludwing Rena and Herbert Read is obvious.

A rat nibbles the toes of Kharku's feet. As the regiment is broken, every sepoy feels sad. Hereafter each man will have to go by himself. The sepoys had naively expected that they would all be put to fight side by side with each other. The Indian soldiers see a Tommy relieving himself by a dugout covered with dry leaves and mud and his white buttocks glisten in the dark. Uncle Kirpu says significantly to Daddy Dhanoo: "So we are not the only people who relieve themselves on the ground." When Lalu sees eight corpses, he wants to lift the covering from each face but is frightened to think that they would be deformed and ugly.

Tommies on the front can be very friendly with the Indians: 'Asleep, very tired,' said a Tommy who stood by his rifle, pointing to a companion in the dugout. And he put his hand to his cheek to indicate a babe asleep even as he mimicked a mother singing a lullaby. And he offered a cigarette to Havildar Lachman Singh and Lalu. The Havildar smiled and declined, but Lalu took the cigarette and bent over the flicker of flame which the soldier held shaded under his cap.

When the dawn comes, human beings are reduced to legs as they are sprawled: "Legs athwart, legs sprawled over the length of the trench, legs propped up to adjacent walls, legs bent and squeesed into knots, legs, legs, legs, a conglomeration of legs was all that was visible of the sepoys as they sat about in the trenches, gathering their coats and blankets about them in the cold, while a few stood at their post behind their rifles in the slime."

On Anand's own confession, he was deeply impressed by the Expressionist school of European painting. His expressionism is not totally untouched by surrealism. This is a quality which brings him close to Joyce. Ulysses was deeply affected by the Expressionist theatre of Zurich where Joyce stayed a long time when he was writing the novel. Though Across the Black Waters is a novel about war, yet it is essentially a novel about human nature adjusting to a catastrophe. Loneliness in the crowd, collective loneliness, alienation and the struggle for adjustment are the things depicted here. I say 'things: because these situations are 'objects' in a philosophic sense-organic and complete.

Loneliness and insecurity make the sepoys eat like beasts: "And then as they walked away or stood or sat they ate large mouthfuls like ravenous, voracious beasts, growling at each other and laughing at the cook who trembled to hear the snipers' bullets going overhead." They are described as "A passionate people, prone to sudden exaltations and depressions, more faithful than any other if they believed, they were neutral in this war, because this was not a war for any of the religions of their inheritance, nor for any ideal which could fire their blood, make their hair stand on end." When Lalu tries to count sheep passing through a gate to get sleep, the sheep are followed by cows and goats and bulls and elephants hurtling in quick succession into his brain. Such a thing happens to Gauri also. There seems to be a profound experience behind this description.

Then there is the Vision of Kali: "From the mud-walled cottages in the midst of a sea, which stank with a stagnant cream of green scum, appeared a woman with a naked coal black body, with eyes that glistened like burning stars, and with a tongue that scattered sparks of fire, a sword in one of her ten hands and rifles in the others." The Goddess by her hot breath puts the whole verdure on fire and all that Lalu could hear was the crackling of the insects which had desecrated the harvest "Owen Sahib said it was a mutiny started by the sepoys while Havildar Lachman Singh was persuading him that it was the battle hymn of Hindustan and he need not be frightened." After an emergency exit Lalu sees the body of Daddy Dhanoo floating in water: "Almost two yards away from him he could see the swollen dead face of Daddy Dhanoo floating in the water, while the rest of his body was submerged with the weight of his equipment." "The old man had seemed so much like a ghost as he had gone about, silent and non-attached in life, that his transformation into a spirit seemed an inevitable and a foregone conclusion." (176)

The tension starts producing hallucinations. Uncle Kirpu hears ghosts weeping tears of blood at the bottom of the wall. (195) Suchet Singh shoots Hanumant at close range for disobedience. (200) When Lok Nath cries in horror, Subedar Suchet Singh orders: "Go ahead boys! Get along!"

It is not the shells nor the bullets of the enemy, it is the hidden cruelty of man released in War. It is the most terrible kind of alienation. The sepoys would never be again what they were as Sassoon has described in his famous poem. Who is responsible? Are they conscious of what they are doing or their wills are completely wiped out? Hanumant is shot dead for not obeying orders. These are passionate people but they do not know why they are fighting. They are not even supposed to get tired. They can still joke and perhaps that is the reason why they do not go mad.

How is Lalu affected by these circumstances? His meeting with a German in fight would explain that: "With instantaneous resolution, the boy stooped low like a lion on the prowl and charged him with his bayonet, fixing him with such force that the butt of his rifle resounded back on his chest. The man gnashed his teeth and groaned as he fell. Lalu groped for his victim, to finish him, murmuring: 'Weep and wail! ... 'He had not suspected such cruelty in himself, but before his fear or pity couid restrain him, a shell soared in the sky and illuminated the shadows and the glass of a wrist-watch on his victim's wrist. He swooped upon the prise, slightly afraid that the man's ghost might strike him or possess him. He had longed for a wrist-watch. He undid the leather strap and, trembling, took the watch and let the hand drop, still warm, on the German's side ...."

There is a passage in which the innocence of the soldiers reminds one of F.T. Prince's poem "Soldiers Bathing": "Lalu waded into the water gingerly. At first he tried to play with it, then trembling, shivering, smiling, he took a dip and began to rub himself furiously. The dirt and scum of days began to roll off his limbs. He called to some sepoys who were retreating towards the farm-house for soap. They called some of their comrades who were soaping themselves by the windmill to throw the soap to Lalu. The chunk was passed from hand to hand. He soaped himself and, after dipping again, ran out of the freezing water and began to towel himself, smiling to the platoon of children who stood watching him."

The sepoys feel a gulf between themselves and the Babu. The sepoys were part of war. The Babu kept out of war but even then felt superior. The sepoys had mostly joined the army out of helplessness. Son after son went to the war because the old parents were peasants heavily in debt. They hoped that some son would earn enough to recover the land they had lost to the moneylender. The second son went and was killed and then went the third or the fourth. When these young men came home on furlough, their crisply starched and ironed clothes made them feel proud. The Sarkar had made them look distinguished. Their standard pay was eleven rupees out of which they saved five or six rupees. This was not enough to satiate the greed of the moneylender or the landlord. But the pigeon-bellied grandmother could be fed.

The proud family imaged that the second, third, fourth son would win promotion, a sudden prise or grant of land. Of course all these children "sprung from the lions of tigresses": "Generally, the second, third or fourth son just returned to a family, which was all dead through a local famine or epidemic or grown old and beggarly out of the bitterness of keeping its end up in a world of rapacity and greed. And the second, third, or fourth son became a scarecrow, a peon or a caretaker for the shopkeepers. Sometimes a war was on somewhere, in a geography of which the family or the son had no conception, and he faded out into thin air, only to confirm his own and the family's prejudice, that all who went beyond the mountains or across the black waters were destined for hell." Occasionally a man returned with a stripe on his arm or a star on his shoulder and demanded a large dowry before wedding the daughter of any worthy in the village, "especially as he had left an arm, a leg or an eye behind, and used a miraculous wooden substitute." When Lalu is on the duty as an orderly, he has to set in order the C.O.'s room. He sees "La Source," the famous painting of Ingres. He was excited by the open nakedness of a painted woman. Such a picture was a totally new experience in his life:

> Actually there was no love in the lives of these sepoys. And there was no necessity for revenge. They were men who had been brought up for generations to a law which dictated that every woman was to be looked upon as a mother or sister. This did not mean that they had never gone to bed with their wives, or that they had never felt the need for woman during all the years of service in the army. Only the customs of their homes did not allow for the kind of kissing and cuddling which they saw the Goras indulging in, but that was only a difference of technique; the husband and wife in their privacy or the lovers trysting in the lentil fields outside the villages, expressed the same human impulses. But in Vilayat, much more than in the cantonments of India, the unwritten laws of the Sarkar prohibited tender impulses, especially for the black men.

But Lalu realised that Sahibs who from a distance loose characters from the Arabian Nights were after all human. When lie sees a white woman crying for her dead son, he knew that even the white men are susceptible to sorrow or joy and to every other kind of human tumult, that they broke down when they were struck. He discovered that even the fairs in France were like the fairs in the Punjab, the owners brought their cows unmilked, so that they might look overstocked, and buyers may not be able to guess the normal yield of an animal. His letter to his mother is one of the most touching passages in the novel.

It is written in the traditional Indian style of the village: To Shrimati Gujar Kaur (Mata Gujri), the widow of Sardar Nihal Singh, Haveli Walla, in the village of Nandpur, Tehail Sherkot, District Manabad, Punjab, Hindustan, this letter is sent by Sepoy Lal Singh, number 1112, 2 Platoon, 2 Company, 69th Rifles, stationed in a village near Ypres, Tehsil Yres, District Yres, Subah Flanders, near Franceville .... The reason why these people are happier is because they do not borrow money from moneylenders. When I come back, I shall ask the Kamel Sahib to order the bania to give back our mortgages, and to get the landlord to return the lands he has seised from us as a reward for fighting in this war. Saying is one thing, you will say, doing another; but have faith, mother, trust in me.

The Sword and the Sickle, the third part of the trilogy, shows that his faith was an illusion. Returning back to his country, he becomes a nobody almost immediately after landing. The army insults him and he is driven away like a dog.

The automaton of the army completely dehumanises man and the Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Inexorable God of Death follows the regiment wherever it goes. The showmanship is comic: "The vigilance of duty demanded' eyes front' so strictly that the sepoys could not see what the General was doing," though Lalu caught a glimpse of General Willcocks Sahib talking to Subedar Major Arbel Singh. Death has no meaning. Kirpa Ram is punished and insulted just for joking. Lalu feels pangs of pity seeing his empty bed and goes to talk to him where he is confined, to find that he has committed suicide.

In spite of Death there is carousing. The war becomes an allegory for Life. As the sepoys revive the rituals of the motherland thousands of miles away, so man finds himself on a dark night far from home. It is the agony of existence. There is no doing except forgetting the predicament in a song:

I want a pair of shoes, I want a pair of shoes

Vay Harman Singha....

I shall fetch for you, I shall fetch for you

A pair of fine shoes, with high heels

Ni Hamamiae....

The sepoys make the song as they sing it. But songs cannot cheat Death. Lalu's individuality is asserted even here because he reverts to another melancholy tune, "Oh mother, one day one has to go." The journey is a series of farewells.

Lalu has two natures: "In him the two poles of nature seemed always to have been quarrelling, as if he had not decided whether to burst out of his skin, as it were, and live outside himself, or to recline back, self-exiled, pain-marred, mutilated with the memories of those hindrances which the world had put in his way." He cultivates a pride in the excess of dignity.

A German plane drops handbills explaining that the Kaiser is an ally of Khaliph-the Sultan of Turkey. The soldiers who are Muslims lose heart and it is inferred that they lose the will to defend themselves. Propaganda in War is the mightiest weapon. Germans are like North Indians. Rikhi Ram reveals displacement behaviour when he rubs soot on his face. He is killed eventually and Lalu is captured as a prisoner of war.

The young boy Andre and his sweet sister Marie and their parents is how the world would be tomorrow. A "child" would lead humanity back to survival. A child, would create a world where Owen Sahib lets the rule be violated when he eats with a black sepoy. He had seen Marie by the brook for the first time, woman by the side of running water is the dream of all poets, a dream which dreams Beauty and Love. Mama is the Mother of tomorrow. Owen Sahib interprets her French in Hindustani: "She says you are at home. And she says the Indians are very nice. Not so the Germans. She says, that this village was captured by Germans twice and she has cooked for the German officers. No good." The mother can feed only witl1love, the child can lead only when your heart is pure. Lalu is the future Man:

Before long Lalu found himself talking to the whole family in the language of gestures and he was completely at home, helping to clear the table, playing snakes and ladders with Andre and Marie.

The subterranean life of desire in Lalu is vague and uncertain. Playing with Maya had brought him to the army. "The hurt of the wounded lover," said the poet Waris Shah, "is like the meeting of the accuser and accused." When he is captured he has crushed the pain of desire for Marie: "And yet, and yet in the face of the unknown, in full view of the spectacle of destruction and death, in the muteness of obedience, he yielded to the suggestions of an instinct which was the revenge of his body upon sadness a strange purblind tenderness or love."

The Sword and the Sickle begins with a brutal disillusionment. The Sarkar for whom he had fought kicks him like a pup. And then this instinct for tenderness, this modest subterranean warm water spring shapes his humanity and makes him a Man, a Man who resolves to live after suffering a million betrayals.

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